

THE AMERICAN DREAMER
RICHARD RORTY AND THE POSTMODERN DILEMMA

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TO

MY WIFE DEBBIE AND MY DAUGHTER ABIGAIL

WHO HAVE TAUGHT ME TO FLY

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ABBREVIATIONS

A Selected list of Richard Rorty's Works

AOC	Achieving Our Country	(1998)
CIS	Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity	(1989)
COP	Consequences of Pragmatism	(1982)
EHO	Essays on Heidegger and Others	(1991)
LGT	Linguistic Turn	(1967)
ORT	Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth	(1991)
PMN	Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature	(1979)
TCF	Take Care of Freedom and Truth will take care of itself	(2006)
TAP	Truth and Progress	(1998)

ABSTRACT

The postmodern age has come to challenge not only the ethos of social modernistic claims, but encroaches upon the theological territory of the evangelical faith. It purposes to reduce religious doctrine to metaphoric myth and diminishes Truth to fictional illusion. The Postmodern age promises to be greater than the Industrial Revolution, a watershed of shifting reason permeating university, theatre, and politics. All of which have dire consequences upon the meaning of national solidarity, family, values, morality and Truth.

The topic “The American Dreamer” discusses Richard Rorty’s philosophic contributions necessary for the solidification of the postmodern agenda, to know his passion to dismantle traditional objective rationale, and to establish a social utopia whose center is without God.

The task is directed toward practical disciplines necessary to discern the mindset and sensibilities of the age. The information will aid the reader to better recognize societal foundations formed by Richard Rorty’s contributions necessary for societal and humanistic evolution.

The purpose is to direct Christians to develop personal and corporate maturity, with an ability to dialogue with individuals whose mindset is one of religious and moral uncertainty in a world on the road to madness.

INTRODUCTION

The Pragmatist renewal within the postmodernist culture panders to a paradigm shift that pursues life without rules and vanity without truth.¹

The *American Dreamer* arose from contemplating a definition for postmodernism, its effects upon American culture, Western Christianity, and the task of Christian renewal in an age of change. In doing so we found the term “postmodern,” in its diversity inadequate to define. For this reason we have chosen to focus upon Richard Rorty as a key contributor to the postmodern position. His intellectual prowess enables the movement to better define its foundational structure, purposes, and goals. And his viewpoints concerning metaphysics, truth, and social structure provide the needed framework for the movement’s survival and success.

Our *purpose* is to provide information regarding Rortyan societal hopes gleaned from contributions of historic philosophic figures and systematized for his approach to eradicating metaphysics and social injustice. Our *task* is to develop discerning minds toward postmodernist central beliefs steeped in Rortyan rationale, and to uncover societal dangers involved in the Rortyan utopian system. Our *goal* is to provide Christians with the ability to answer postmodernist claims from a Christian perspective and to recognize the purpose of the Church in an ever changing environment.

¹ Postmodernism has not only challenged the ethos of social modernistic claims, but encroaches upon the theological territory of the evangelical church reducing religious doctrine to metaphoric myth and changing fact to fictional illusion. The paradigm shift “promises to be greater than the invention of the printing press and mightier than the Industrial Revolution.” Gene Edward Veith Jr., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*, (Wheaton, Crossway Books, 1994), 18.

CHAPTER ONE

THE MESSENGER, THE MESSAGE, AND THE MADNESS

Beware then when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet. Then all things are at risk. It is as when a conflagration [blazing inferno] has broken out on the city, and no man knows what is safe, or where it will end. There is not a piece of science but its flank that may not be revised and condemned. The very hopes of man, the thoughts of his heart, the religion of nations, the manners and morals of humanity are all at the mercy of a new generalization. Generalization is always in the influx of the divinity into the mind. Hence the thrill that attends it. In nature every moment is new; the past is always swallowed and forgotten; the coming only is sacred.¹

RICHARD RORTY: PROPHET OF THE NEW AGE

The American philosophical leader, essayist and, poet Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) describes above the situation of a culture in transition namely, the hopes, thoughts, religion, virtues, and morals of humanity are weighed in the balance, and are at the mercy of a new generalization, i.e. assumptions that have little or no evidence of truth. The new age seeks for new concepts or innovations to free us of the fallacies of the past and to pursue progress in light of our mistakes producing new voices in the dawning of the new age. One such name is Richard Rorty.

The Dawning – A *Biographical Sketch*

The development of Richard Rorty's calling began before his birth when humanity grappled to find truth to the meaning of life, a time in America's evolution where invention was the tool to progressive reality, a means to end bloodshed, brokenness, and humanity's inhumanity to man. As a byproduct of the industrial age

¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, (New York: Sully and Kleinteich, 1883), 288.

Rorty frowns upon traditional values – especially Platonic thought or Christian traditional values which he believes are at the source of many of our troubles today and concepts that we would be better off without.

In 2000 Philosopher Richard Rorty stood before a packed house of students and former colleagues at the University of Virginia staking his claim as a militant secularist. He applauded the Enlightenments right to suggest that religion is something that the human species would be better if it could outgrow. He called their attention to Diderot who said the last king should be strangled with the entrails of the last priest, and though some of his best friends were priests he felt some sympathy with all these critics of religious institutions.²

An Evolutionary Construct

Rorty is called by some “the prophet and poet of the new pragmatism,”³ and has emerged as the most interesting and perhaps the most controversial public philosopher in America. He argues philosophical assumptions and methods have somehow come to an end sending America into a post-philosophical age. He is a prolific writer contending that imagination and poetic literature represents the cutting edge to transforming a culture.

² Jason Boffetti, *How Richard Rorty Found Religion, First Things: A Journal of Religion and Public Life*, Issue: 143 (2004), 24.

Note: Most American thinkers of the pragmatist persuasion have longed for a prophet to lead them out of the doldrums of pragmatism. David L. Hall, *Richard Rorty: Prophet of the New Pragmatism*, (State University of New York Press, 1994), 1. The difference between old pragmatism and new pragmatism is new pragmatists talk about language instead of experience, or mind, or consciousness, as the old pragmatists did. 2. The second respect is that we have all become suspicious of the term “scientific method.” New Pragmatists wish that Dewey, Sidney Hook, and Ernest Nagel had not insisted on using this term as a catchphrase, since we are unable to provide anything distinctive for it to denote. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 95.

There are innumerable factors contributing to Rorty's personal development, and we will speak of four defining contributors: environmental, emotional, educational, and spiritual.

First, Rorty is a product of his environment. Richard McKay Rorty was born 4 October 1931, in New York City to James and Winifred Rorty,⁴ maternal grandson to Walter Rauschenbusch, known as the Father of the Social Gospel.⁵ Rorty's parents were free-lance journalists and contributed to magazines such as Harper's, Commonweal, and Commentary. James Rorty worked with Philosopher Sidney Hook on leftist causes like the anticapitalist, revolutionary American Workers Party. He later rejoined Hook in moving away from radicalism altogether.

The Rorty's often spent time with personalities such as A. Philip Randolph, Norman Thomas, Irving Howe, and Lionel and Diana Trilling. The epitomized the intellectually cosmopolitan lifestyle of the time, as depicted in books like Edmund

⁴ Note: Winifred Rorty was also a writer—a specialist on race relations and like her husband James she was a Communist and active on behalf of leftist social causes. She was steeped in progressive values and the connections of a socially active and politically conscious family. She had been a graduate student of Robert Parker at the University of Chicago during the heyday of the Chicago School of social theorists. Charles Guignon and David R. Hiley, eds., *Richard Rorty: Contemporary Philosophy in Focus*, (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3.

⁵ Walter Rauschenbusch was attracted to Anabaptist messianic beliefs (what might be called a form of "realized eschatology") and their radical social movement. Yet he also worried that the Anabaptists overstressed the doctrine of the church as an external, visible community in continuity with the apostolic church. He thus offered a counter-proposal: "Where the Spirit is, there is the church." As a pastor in New York City he prayed, "May Thy kingdom come, may Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven" in a manner that imagined and invented a new form of utopian, social Christianity for the American situation. Paul M. Minus, *Walter Rauschenbusch: American Reformer*, (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1988), 82.

Wilson's he intellectually cosmopolitan lifestyle of the time, as depicted in books like Edmund Wilson's *Memoirs of Hecate County*.⁶

His parents were highly committed to the American Communist Party, and followers of Leon Trotsky, raising him to believe that all "decent people" were socialists and that "the point of being human was to spend one's life fighting social injustice."

Rorty writes,

I grew up knowing the temptations and terrors of radical politics" that respectable people if not "Trotskyites" at least "socialists." "I knew that poor people would always be oppressed until capitalism was overcome" and by the age twelve "I knew that the point of being human was to spend one's life fighting social injustice."⁷

James was also a front organizer for "league of professional Groups" (a communist party platform) for Foster and Ford, - candidates for president. Rorty read many of his father's magazines and journals which he subscribed to: Norman Thomas' Socialist Party, *The Call*, DeLeonite Socialist Labor Party, and Shachtmanite Socialist Workers' Party. From this perspective Rorty gained his understanding of how to think about his country and politics was formed, here he learned what justice meant – decent wages and working conditions, and the end of racial prejudice.

⁶ Richard Rorty, *Take Care of Freedom and Truth will Take Care of Itself: Interviews with Richard Rorty*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta, (Palo Alto, CA., Stanford University Press, 2006), 4-5.

⁷ Note: Leon Trotsky, rival of Joseph Stalin, anti-totalitarian, "whom Rorty's parents loved more than Jesus," and whom Stalin had assassinated in Mexico, 1940. Rorty describes the most salient books on his parents shelves were two red-bound volumes "The Case of Leon Trotsky" and "Not Guilty," describing the Dewey Commission of Inquiry into the Moscow Trials. Rorty replies "I thought of them as other children thought of their family Bible – books that radiated redemptive truth and moral splendor," and "If I were a good boy, I should have read not only the "Dewey Commission Reports", but also Trotsky's "History of the Russian Revolution." Rorty, PSH, 5-6. As a youth Rorty also read Marx since his parent's home was full of Marx. *Ibid.*, 40.

Rorty associated the police as goon squad, (perhaps as the SS in Hitler's Germany) who in those days were still being regularly hired to beat up strikers. The strikers in the coal fields and the steel mills were his heroes of the time. He prized the union's who stood against the rich and greedy.⁸

Rorty's mother, Winifred Raushenbush Rorty, also played a part in what Rorty was to believe. She was a writer –a specialist in race relations, a communist like James, active in leftist causes, steeped in progressive values, graduate of Robert Parker at the University of Chicago's School of social theory.⁹

In short, Rorty holds the dreams of American leftism as a family tradition. He was a “red diaper baby,” raised in the days when socialists in the United States could still believe that Communism was 20th-century Americanism.¹⁰ But there is more to Rorty's life that can be defined by environmental circumstances. Rorty also struggled with emotional circumstances.

Rorty's life may also be defined by inner struggles for personal tranquility. One might add though Rorty was raised in the causes of social justice, he records that he also had an abstract, absolutist, and aesthetic bent. While living in Flatbrookville, New Jersey he underwent a religious period, saying: “I had felt touched by something numinous, something of ineffable as he spent time in the woods with his special love of nature, especially wildflowers and birds and wished to experience his beloved

⁸ Rorty honored protests against the Vietnam War (1964-1972), stating: If students had not protested the Vietnam War America would have to be a much worse place to live.” Richard Rorty, *Achieving our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth Century America*, (Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998), 58 - 60.

⁹ Guignon, Richard Rorty, 3.

¹⁰ Rorty's parents broke with the Communist Party in 1932 (when he was one year old), having concluded that it served the interests of imperialistic Russianism rather than American socialism. They were part of an American liberal tradition whose aspiration was to correct social injustices by persuading ordinary citizens - not least, educated middle-class voters like themselves - to insist on redistributive interventions by their government.. Jonathan Rée, *Strenuous Unbelief*, 20: 7-11.

William Wordsworth whose conservative poetry was laced with relationships between humanity and nature.¹¹ He yearned to be a poet but his father, James, who had published a book of his own poetry, harshly discouraged him with critical comments.¹²

His study of North American wild orchids, lead him to believe they were “morally superior to the showy, hybridized, tropical orchids displayed in florist’s shops.” He considered the wild orchids noble, pure, chaste, but felt slightly uneasy about his interest in these socially useless flowers which drove him passionately to understand their unique significance in the world.¹³

At the same time he felt torn between Trotsky, who would never approve of such insignificance as wild orchids, and carrying out the Rortyan family tradition of

¹¹ William Wordsworth: (1770-1850), English poet, one of the most accomplished and influential of England's romantic poets, whose theories and style created a new tradition in poetry. Much of Wordsworth's easy flow of conversational blank verse has true lyrical power and grace, and his finest work is permeated by a sense of the human relationship to external nature that is religious in its scope and intensity. To Wordsworth, God was everywhere manifest in the harmony of nature, and he felt deeply the kinship between nature and the soul of humanity. Microsoft ® Encarta ® 2006. © 1993-2005 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

¹² Biographical information on James Rorty is in Alan Wald, *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 54-55. Biographical data on Rorty's crisis is from L. S. Klepp, *Every Man a Philosopher-King*, *New York Times Magazine*, December 2, 1990, 117-18. Also see, most recently, Rorty's revealing explanation for his own public/private perceptions Mark Edmundson, *Trotsky and the Wild Orchids*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 29-50.

¹³ As a teen-ager, Rorty took great pride in being able to find and identify (by their Latin names) seventeen species of wild orchid. "I was," he comments, "uneasily aware that there was something a bit dubious about this esotericism --this interest in socially useless flowers." Yet Rorty's love for wild orchids is illustrative of Rorty's sensitivity toward the less honored, lonely, oppressed, poor, weak, outcast of society, and a fighter for justice, and serves as a symbol fro his lifelong desire for intellectual purity and singular devotion to something transcendent. He chooses pragmatism over platonic thought “which never worked for him” and which many of his professors looked down upon.

American socialism. He was required to keep vows of silence¹⁴ and sought refuge from bullies “whom I assume;” according to Rorty, “would somehow wither away once capitalism had been overcome.” As a courier he read drafts and press releases comprising of labor disputes and social injustices. He witnessed his father’s struggles for political views and later found himself under like spell defined by vocational anxieties.¹⁵

In a word, Rorty’s unique upbringing and personal struggles to understand reality, as “the Woodworthian moments” in the woods ... “especially in the presence of certain coralroot orchids, and of the smaller yellow lady slippers” were indescribably real and the necessity to carry out traditional family values to establish justice, “what Norman Thomas and Trotsky both stood for – liberating the weak from the strong.” For Rorty, this was an example of patriotic America, pursuing freedom and justice for all.¹⁶

Nevertheless, Rorty’s educative direction will provide another defining theme in pursuance of his destiny. At fifteen his parents enrolled him in a new college for precocious teenagers at the University of Chicago as Rorty recalls “by going off to the so-called Hutchins College of the University of Chicago.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Frequent guests to the Rorty home were John Dewey, Sidney Hook, Lionel Trilling, The Italian anarchist Carlo Teresa, and John Frank, Trotsky’s secretary who lived with the Rorty’s under an assumed name. Scott Holland, *The Coming is only Sacred: Self-Creation and Social Solidarity in Richard Rorty’s Secular Eschatology*, Cross Currents, Winter 2004, 494.

¹⁵ As Rorty worked in the field of analytical philosophy employing its language and methods he felt “sheer terror” at the thought of continuing to work within its assumptions and methods. To a lesser degree than James, Rorty went through a period of depression --“one year of clinical depression”--when he found himself incapable of writing anything. Boffetti, *How Richard Rorty Found Religion*, 24.

¹⁶ Rorty, *PSH*, 7-8.

¹⁷ Hutchins College allowed some precocious students to enter in the middle of high school. At Hutchins Rorty study classical curriculum under scholars like Leo Strauss and

Rorty's entered the University of Chicago seeking for an absolute which would enable him to justify one side of himself with the other. "I wanted a way to be both an intellectual and spiritual snob and a friend of humanity – a nerdy recluse and a fighter for justice." He reports in an especially telling observation that insofar as he had any project in mind at the university, it was "to find some intellectual or aesthetic framework which would let me—in a thrilling phrase which I came across in Yeats—hold reality and justice in a single vision."

Rorty's educative years led him to consider a diversity of philosophic options. He found two possibilities, Christianity and Platonism. The University of Chicago provided intellectual greats such as Mortimer Adler and Richard McKeon who had captured much of the university in a sense of mystique about neo-Aristotelianism, and targeted John Dewey's pragmatism, the philosophy of his parents, as vulgar, relativistic, and self-refuting, whose only value in defeating the Nazis ideal that "growth itself is the only moral end," given the idea that "truth is what works is to reduce the quest for truth to the quest for power." Therefore the only answer to fascism and the Nazi cause was to focus on transcendent and metaphysical truths by:

Appealing to something eternal, absolute, and good – like the God of St. Thomas, or the nature of human beings' described by Aristotle would permit one to answer Nazism by justifying one's choice of social democracy over fascism.¹⁸

This argumentation seemed logical to Rorty and his "fifteen year old ears," and he was able to connect this with his understanding of wild Orchids "numinous, hard to

Richard McKeon, alongside students like the future classicist and cultural scourge Allan Bloom. Rorty, *TCF* 5.

¹⁸ Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, (Mass: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 7.

find, known only to a chosen few,” and since Dewey was a hero to all he had known growing up, “scorning Dewey was a convenient form of adolescent revolt.”¹⁹

While at Chicago Rorty was attracted to another poet, T. S. Eliot, also a well known dramatist, and literary critic, who suggested only committed Christians (and perhaps only Anglo-Catholics), could overcome private obsessions in order to serve humanity with virtuous humility. Yet Rorty became convinced that Platonic thought following Socrates statement was right “virtue was knowledge,” and given his intellectual giftedness, he chose philosophy as a major. Besides according to Rorty Christianity didn’t work for him: A prideful inability to believe what I was saying when I recited the General Confession gradually lead me to give up on my awkward attempts to get religion.²⁰

Since Christianity seemed impossible for Rorty on a personal level he became more and more convinced that if he became a philosopher he might get to the top of Plato’s divided line, that is, the place “beyond hypothesis where the full sunshine of Truth irradiates the purified soul of the wise and good.” Thus “Platonism had all the advantages of religion, without requiring the humility that Christianity demanded, and of which I was apparently incapable.”²¹ Rorty states:

I read through Plato during my fifteenth summer, and convinced myself that Socrates was right—virtue was knowledge. That claim was music to my ears, for I had doubts about my own moral character and a suspicion that my only gifts were intellectual ones.²²

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 9.

²¹ Mark Edmundson, *Trotsky and Wild Orchids*, 38.

²² Rorty, *CIS*, 9.

But Platonic thought didn't pan out. He struggled with analyzing whether the Platonist philosopher was aiming at the ability to offer irrefutable argument, i.e. the ability to convince anyone he encountered of what he believed or instead was aiming at a sort of incommunicable, private bliss, i.e. how can absolute argumentative statements can be coupled with a state of the will whereby doubts are stilled in which you no longer wish to argue or to be able to have the final word on a matter. Both goals seemed desirable but lacked the ability to be fully grasped. These issues plagued Rorty's intellect as he recognized the tension between both concepts to hold reality and justice in a single vision; a peaceful coexistence between two pressure points; one an irrefutable construct, convincing all comers, the other identifying factual evidence through incommunicable certainty and expect to hold reality and justice in a single vision.

Rorty worried about the tension in Plato's thought between constructing arguments for one's position that will convince all comers and achieving the incommunicable certainty of the good that lies beyond dialectic and argument ... about the problem of giving noncircular arguments for one's first principles ... the inability to achieve a neutral standpoint ... to adjudicate alternative first principles ... about the worth of philosophical talent itself, since it seemed to come to nothing more than "a matter of proliferating as many distinctions as were needed to wriggle out of a dialectical corner ... became less and less certain that developing this skill was going to make me either wise or virtuous ... Since that initial disillusion (which climaxed about the time I left Chicago to get a Ph.D. in philosophy at Yale), I have spent 40 years looking for a coherent and convincing way of formulating my worries about what, if anything, philosophy is good for." ²³

While Rorty struggled with understanding Platonic thought as a means to hold reality and justice in a single vision he sat under the tutelage of Rudolph Carnap,

²³ Ibid., 10 - 11.

Charles Hartshorne, and process theologian Richard McKeon all of whom were his teachers at Chicago.

Their significant influence upon Rorty's life established his denial of traditional, i.e. objective methods for establishing truth claims without having to contend with circular argumentation establishing progressivism as a means to an end. Rorty acknowledges Carnap's argument following positivist ideas that held subjectivism, i.e. personal experience, as the basis for true knowledge,²⁴ Hartshorne's belief in process thought, and progressive evolutionary reality,²⁵ and McKeon may have convinced Rorty that truth has no single expression, to value other philosophic ideas, i.e. pluralistic diversity, and to define philosophy by its cultural and humanistic discoveries via collective action, mutual understanding and eventual agreement on issues of ideological or philosophic belief."²⁶

²⁴ Rudolph Carnap, [During the early 20th century a group of philosophers who were concerned with developments in modern science rejected the traditional positivist ideas that held personal experience to be the basis of true knowledge and emphasized the importance of scientific verification. This group came to be known as logical positivists, and it included the Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein and the British Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore. It was Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus* (1921; German-English parallel text, 1922) that proved to be of decisive influence in the rejection of metaphysical doctrines for their meaninglessness and the acceptance of empiricism as a matter of logical necessity. Microsoft® Encarta® 2006. © 1993-2005 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

²⁵ Note: Charles Hartshorne: [1897-2000), an American philosopher and theologian, born in Kittanning, Pennsylvania. He taught at the University of Chicago, Emory University, and the University of Texas. Hartshorne was one of the chief advocates of process thought, an approach that emphasizes the progressive or evolutionary nature of reality. Even God is considered in process through his association with the changing world]. Ibid.

²⁶ Note: Richard McKeon [1900-1985], an American philosopher, pivotal but often neglected figure in twentieth Century American philosophy. His career spanned seven decades, published 158 articles and 11 books. He was honored for all conceivable awards as an American philosopher, "including an invitation to deliver the Paul Carus Lectures in 1969. Paul Carus was a German-American editor, born at Ilseburg, Germany, and educated at the universities of Strasbourg and Tübingen and afterward he immigrated to the United States and established himself in Chicago, where he became editor of the *Open Court* and the *Monist*. Carus considered himself a theologian rather than philosopher, however. He referred to himself

Rorty stayed on at the University of Chicago to pursue his Masters degree in philosophy²⁷, with a thesis on Whitehead, and supervised by Hartshorne from 1952 to 1956, and received his PhD from Yale with a dissertation entitled “The Concept of Potentiality,” supervised by Paul Weiss. Yet Rorty had yet to resolve his personal struggle with arriving at truth from within the confines of Platonism.²⁸

Although Rorty may have embraced the possibility of holding reality and justice in a single vision as Plato had he became troubled over the conceptual good philosophy had to offer so he directed himself toward the analytic field of philosophy. Something was about to happen that would ultimately convince him that there was surer ground to stand upon than analytically based Platonic principles for providing undeniable truth claims assuming the books he was studying and reviewing throughout the 1960’s lead him to realize his doubts about the future of analytic philosophy.²⁹.

as "an atheist who loved God." As a Pantheist he referred to such concepts as henism, rather than monism. Available online from <http://en.wikipedia.org>

²⁷ Rorty’s decision to pursue a career in philosophy was tantamount to a career choice. James Rorty was rather surprised and dismayed by the idea and asked his friend Hook to give his son advice (“He wasn’t encouraging,” says Rorty of Hook. “He just said things like ‘publish early and often.’”). Rorty, *TCF*, 5.

²⁸ Rorty’s dissertation was entitled, *The Concept of Potentiality in Aristotle and the Seventeenth Century Rationalists*. Dr. Rorty taught for two years at Wellesley College and in 1961 Rorty was recruited to teach Aristotelian philosophy at Princeton, remaining there for 21 years while becoming interested in continental philosophy, especially the writings of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida. At the same time he moved back to studying John Dewey – the same philosopher who was always in the air of his parent’s home. Gordon D. Marino, *Shattering Philosophy’s Mirror: A Conversation with Richard Rorty*, Commonweal, Volume 121, Issue: 9, (1994), 11.

²⁹ Rorty read books such as: John Blewett’s *John Dewey: His Thought and Influence*; Raymond Aron’s *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*; Edward Moore’s *American Pragmatism: Peirce, James, and Dewey*; Paul Goodman’s *Utopian Essays and Practical Proposals*; Edward Madden’s *Chauncey Wright and the Foundations of Pragmatism*; H. D. Lewis’s *Clarity Is Not Enough: Essays in Criticism of Linguistic Philosophy*- to name a few

In retrospect, we can take seriously Rorty’s introduction to *The Linguistic Turn*. In which he raises doubts about the future of analytic philosophy, writing about it in past tense, and in

The fourth aspect of Rorty's formation is spiritual or religious in nature. Rorty's life is not void of spiritual or religious roots.

Rorty never knew his maternal grandfather Walter Raushenbush (1861-1918), and "Father of the Social Gospel."³⁰ But it would be a rare if Winifred, his mother had not shared with him her fathers influence and fame; perhaps more extraordinary, knowing Rorty's passion for literature if he has not researched all his grandfathers books and read in detail his quest to minimize the transcendent and maximize the immanent.

While serving in New York City, Raushenbush was deeply moved by the devastating social effect of the 1893 economic depression, and preached against those he described as "servants of Mammon ... who drain their fellow men for gain ... who made us ashamed of our dear country by their defilements ... [and] who have cloaked their extortion with the Gospel of Christ."³¹

Rorty fails to mention in his writings if his grandfather's legacy had an influential impact upon his life, nor does he give any details of a born again experience; disqualifying us from labeling him as the "backslidden" grandson of Walter Rauschenbusch.³² Yet Rauschenbusch had impacted his parents, especially his mother

which he announces his anti-Platonic sympathies with Heidegger and the later Wittgenstein. We may also see that Rorty's eliminative materialism, then deemed to be merely one among various alternative positions available in the debate over mind-body identity, was actually an attempt to undermine the entire modern (Cartesian) philosophical tradition that organized the world in terms of mind and matter. Guignon, Richard Rorty, 6.

³⁰ Rorty's German grandfather Walter Rauschenbusch: hailed as the Father of the Social Gospel, sixth in a generational line of university trained Lutheran pastors, understudy of Anabaptist Ludwig Keller in Munster, and recognized as one of the first truly fine scholars of Anabaptism in America. Holland, *The Coming is only sacred*, 494.

³¹ Walter Rauschenbusch, *Prayers of the Social Awakening*, (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1909) 101.

³² Richard Rorty believes religion should be kept to one's self because it is unobjectionable as long as it remains privatized. Furthermore, Rorty states he is one who has not any upbringing in religious matters nor developed an attachment to any religious tradition and is hence religiously unmusical. Richard Rorty, and Gianni Vattimo, *The Future of Religion*, Santiago Zabala, ed., (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 33.

who “quoted Raushenbush often.” Perhaps indirectly Raushenbush left his grandson with a sense of antimilitarism because Raushenbush remained a pacifistic, and conscientious objector and though Rorty was drafted in 1956, and served a two year stint in the army, he continues to associate antimilitarism with a continual need to institute new laws and new principles.

Furthermore Rorty realizes his grandfather’s passion as he identified with the late nineteenth century liberal Christianity which included the Social Gospel as a means to rescue the underprivileged of society from the clutches of hierarchal capitalism and power hungry political menus, and to especially reduce emphasis upon the metaphysical as an important means to social recovery.” Rorty began to “believe that the Social Gospel teaches that “we should read the New Testament as saying that how we treat one another is more important than arguing if there is another world out there and he will eventually realize that liberal Christianity will in the long run renew American political life.”

Richard Rorty’s quest to find reality and justice in a single vision does not end with his academic studies, nor does his desire to find a way to reform the philosophic academy into a meaningful coherent whole.

He continued his search for reality while no one knew he was disillusioned and remained a highly regarded analytic philosopher, desired by university philosophy departments and published on a great scale. Rorty continued his quest to fulfill a personal void and ambition, to find a conscious peace of mind and to offer an irrefutable argument that would remove all conscious doubts.

When Rorty wrote the introduction to his book *The Linguistic Turn* (1967), he still hoped to resolve perennial analytic questions of the philosophic kind, by reforming its use of language, or creating an ideal logical language for philosophic use that may solidify philosophic discussion. But Rorty was about to transition into another phase.

The Awakening – A New Sense of Being.

Richard Rorty received his first academic appointment at Wellesley College from 1961 – 1964,³³ then relocated to Princeton University (having one of the most prestigious philosophical programs in the country). At Princeton Rorty rigorously studied technical terms used in the field of Analytic philosophy and in a hermeneutical sense sought to identify the meanings of words and the objects to which they referred. Rorty's followers (colleagues) sought to "reveal the structure and accuracy of our statements about the world." Rorty began to make a name for himself as his quest to find out what was wrong with analytic philosophy spread through the philosophic academy, and because of controversy and pressure he found himself expelled from the mainstream of philosophical community but welcomed to the chair of humanities at the University of Virginia.³⁴

³³ In the mid nineteen sixties, Rorty gained attention for his articulation of eliminative materialism (cf., "Mind-Body Identity, Privacy and Categories," 1965). He also edited, and wrote a lengthy introduction to, a volume entitled *The Linguistic Turn* (1967, reissued with a new introduction in 1992).

³⁴ Rorty writes: "My colleagues were not pleased, though they were hardly surprised; my recollection is that for the first ten years at Princeton, I was seen as increasingly contrarian or difficult. In addition to philosophical differences, there were personal complications: I got divorced and remarried, and because my first wife was philosopher and a friend of my colleagues, there were problems. It was not a friendly divorce, and I didn't handle it well." Rorty, *TCF* 8-9.

Although Rorty moved from the mainstream of the philosophic academy, he did not move into obscurity at the University of Virginia. He found himself, almost immediately, carried into an American Culture War as a champion of postmodern theory.

On one side he laid into the cultural conservatives who believe that European philosophy is the bulwark of civilization itself. To the contrary, Rorty said: the great philosophers from Plato through Descartes to Kant are apostles of intellectual intolerance, and the only reason for reading their books is to bore yourself so rigid that you will never be tempted to pick one up again. On the other side he attacked the scientific triumphalists who were convinced that all lines of scientific inquiry are programmed to converge - next year perhaps, or at least the year after - at a single terminus called Nature or Truth. Quite the reverse: scientism was a throwback to religious superstition, and a priesthood of single-minded physicists would be an even greater threat to democracy than a priesthood of sententious theologians.³⁵

Nevertheless, Rorty, compelled by philosophic concepts instituted by individuals such as Sellars, Quine, Davidson, Wilfred, and John Dewey made a dramatic change in his understanding for philosophy. For Rorty those of the pragmatist position sought to revive philosophy and courageously tackle problems by dissecting philosophic constructs in which they felt were misunderstood or flawed, and focusing their attention on what remained. According to Rorty,

“Pragmatists generally hold that the worth of an idea should be measured by its usefulness or ability to cope with a given problem, not by its correspondence to some antecedent Truth.”³⁶

Rorty took another step in his understanding of Jacques Derrida and his influential change agent Heidegger who also convinced Rorty of the hermeneutic tradition of

³⁵ Rée, *Strenuous Unbelief* 20, 20:7-11.

³⁶ Rorty combines pragmatism with a Wittgensteinian ontology that declares that meaning is a social-linguistic product, and sentences do not 'link up' with the world in a correspondence relation, a framework that allows him to question many of philosophy's most basic assumptions. Ibid.

“Continental thought” which employs hermeneutics rather than objective observations to appeal to truth claims. Continental thought may be defined as: “The project of breaking down language into its component parts in favor of approach to knowledge more akin to literary interpretation than to scientific analysis.”³⁷

Soon Rorty found himself in two worlds with one foot in the world of analytic philosophy and the other in the world of Continental traditions which he called the therapeutic philosophical question: “How can we avoid, rather than solve, the philosophical problems that bedevil us?”³⁸

Rorty may agree that the timing of his discovery was near perfect. It was a time in which he struggled with analytic assumptions and methods to the point of a deep clinical depression. He recounts at this time America was entering into post-philosophical age where ninety-eight percent of philosophy departments throughout the country were in decline and not serious about their educational venues:³⁹

During a five-year period following his breakdown, Rorty devoured the works of the great pragmatists—James, Dewey, and Sydney Hook. Their work led him to conclude that both analytic philosophy and the linguistic turn were nothing more than the “last refuge” of representationalism. What was needed was a “cosmological” turn, much like the transition from a “Ptolemaic-Aristotelian cosmology to a Copernican-Newtonian one.” The pragmatists—a philosophical school that Rorty believes includes not only Dewey and James, but also the “proto-pragmatist” Friedrich Nietzsche—had already effected that cosmological turn, but few had noticed. Philosophy’s most vexing problems,

³⁷ Rorty, *TCF* 6.

³⁸ This was the beginning of his controversial book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton University Press, 1983).and the positioning himself as prophet of the new pragmatism where he would seek to bridge the analytic world of philosophy with Continental traditions, and by blending historic philosophical contributions in a somewhat systematic way to establish his concept of a world without intellectual means of establishing truth claims.

³⁹ A continuing theme of Rorty is that somehow, philosophy has come to an end, either for the reason it has become mentally ingrown and can no longer expand itself or because philosophy has lost its purity of language or other factors which inhibit philosophy from being analytic in nature.

they taught, can never be solved; they can only be dissolved. Pragmatism would serve for him as an antidote to both the hubris of analytic philosophy and, ultimately, the circularity of postmodernism.⁴⁰

In the future Rorty would begin to promote a post-philosophical culture where everyone would accept knowledge as relative, that is to create a system whereby absolutes are eradicated.

Richard Rorty's life is a byproduct of the modern age of secularism. He had experienced the painful reality of life and has sought answers to human injustice. His pursuit of a pathway to resolve societal suffering is honorable, but in doing so he had become imprisoned in his own internal yearnings for a personal and conscious absolute. His is the story of humanity seeking to be infinite while being finite.

The Rortyan search for truth has followed him throughout his life and through several transitional moments from the spiritual to the intellectual, from the religious to the philosophical, and from monotheism to romantic polytheism. In doing so, Rorty has devoted himself to becoming another kind of crusader, one who would work – as a professor, a prolific writer, and even president of the American Philosophical Association – to redirect the philosophy profession away from the search for a single vision that could orient his life and his philosophy.

Rorty had yet to find a sure haven of rest within the philosophical field. In the 1980 he realized theistic faith that was still a possibility, but out of the question unless religion set the standard of becoming a non argumentative faith, embodied love, power, and justice in equal measure in a way that Plato had wished. Since he had

⁴⁰ Boffetti, *How Rorty Found Religion*, 24-30.

become increasingly secularist in his outlook, for Rorty religion seemed far from the possibility of encompassing reality and justice in a single vision.

Since I couldn't image becoming religious, and indeed had gotten more and more raucously secularist, I decided that the hope of getting a single vision by becoming a philosopher had been a self-deceptive atheist's way out. So I decided to write a book about what intellectual life might be like if one could manage to give up the Platonic attempt to hold reality and justice in a single vision.⁴¹

Rorty is referring to his work *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* whereby he seeks to describe his utopian view without the pressures of coinciding reality and justice in a single vision since both can work side by side without difference. What Rorty implies is to keep ones private reality or beliefs to one's self so that incident may not occur. In this way solidarity or harmony may become the standard by which all peoples may work toward a single objective, the irradiation of social injustice.

It would seem that Rortyan thinking has come full circle. While seeking to eradicate social injustice by eliminating outward expressions of belief culminating in a common harmony, he has developed a new religious faith that gives him a unified picture of the universe. He has come to accept that all competing worldviews are ultimately competing commitments to some orienting faith or belief system. Conflict between worldviews can be resolved by an appeal to reason or objective standards of truth. At the core all worldviews require faith and hope.

We will revisit issues pertaining to faith, hope, and belief and how Rorty resolves the difficult questions of truth in the midst a philosophically saturated society, Rorty believes this is in need of a revival of methodology to close the gap between the

⁴¹ Rorty, *CIS*, 23.

analytic and hermeneutically inclined academies of thought. His contribution can be termed a neo-pragmatism.⁴²

Having held teaching positions at Wellesley College, Princeton University, and the University of Virginia, Rorty is currently professor of comparative literature at Stanford University where he remains an anti-Platonist rejecting the appearance-essence, or contingent-eternal distinction that is fundamental of Platonism. The shift from the discipline of philosophy to literature reflects Rorty's evolved position that philosophy is essentially a form of literature and language, a social construct i.e. if we deconstruct and reconstruct language we may also be able to reconstruct behavioral and societal issues.⁴³

Rorty arrived at the position that to seek reality and justice in a single vision and a convincing argument for a unified account of the universe was impossible. It was the same mistake – that the pursuit of such a vision had been precisely what led Plato astray. Thus Rorty concluded that seeking a conclusion for such a quest must be

⁴² Richard Rorty, whose mature pragmatist writings, dating from 1972, spearheaded a re-invigoration of this prominent tradition in American philosophy. Pragmatism rejects the epistemological claims of both transcendental and empiricist variants of traditional philosophy; for the pragmatist, “a meaningful world emerges through man's behavioral rapport with that which gives itself in experience.” William James gave a distinctive, if contentious, inflection to the practical orientation of pragmatism in his definition of truth as “only the expedient in our way of thinking” (i.e., “what has fruitful consequences”). Pragmatism and phenomenology converge at the point of the intentional mind-world relation as well as understanding that knowledge or meaning is consequential to this relation. Unlike post-structuralism, these philosophies revise rather than eliminate the rational subject of Cartesianism: the “autonomous, self-determined” subject that is “endowed with the capability of a truth-bearing (because truth-creating) introspection. Sylvia Harrison, *Pop Art and the Origins of Post-Modernism*, (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 15.

⁴³ Rorty's account of language and truth chimes with Nietzsche's definition of truth as a mobile army of metaphors. Therefore, he understands his work as a philosopher as a companion of the poet rather than the partner of the physicist or metaphysician, for he is convinced that there is no intrinsic nature of either the world or the self that analytical language can finally and fully “get right.” Holland, *The Coming Only Is Sacred*, 494.

eradicated and turned from analytical philosophy to pragmatism as the vehicle to revive the philosophic academy.⁴⁴

Rise to Fame

It is logical to assume the name Richard Rorty or his contribution to the postmodern effort to socialize America is not the topic of the day, and perhaps one of the dangers a society encounters is when individuals of Rorty's stature and of others of like faith are granted seats in higher education and are for the most part tucked away from view.

Rorty's rise to fame, if you will, is not a mistake. His upbringing and personal ambitions have allowed him to walk in the footsteps of great philosophers and thinkers such as John Dewey, Rorty's mentor, who believed that hard work, commitment, and publication are essential tools for societal change.

Perhaps God has allowed Rorty's dogma to enter the halls of the philosophic academy to challenge the hearts of humanity in order to test what is Truth, or in Rortyan vernacular reality and justice in a single vision.

Yet there another aspect to Rorty's super star status to pop fame and that is controversy. One of Rorty's most influential nemeses Hillary Putnam has engaged him in dogfights for decades. The battle between two of the best known contemporary professionals has attracted an unprecedented readership. Their printed reviews, although seemingly trivial at times, have a deeper meaning than what shows on the surface of English-language philosophy and to a larger extent Western philosophy.

⁴⁴ Mark Edmundson, *Trotsky and Wild Orchids*, 41.

Presently the battle lines have become borders and there is a sense that a type of demilitarized zone separates the two contenders. It would seem that recent disputes have become more like rock-throwing events and for the moment Putnam seems to have been bested.⁴⁵

The Rorty and Putnam debate has brought new life to a nearly forgotten philosophy almost as a by-product of their skirmishes.

What it signifies, ultimately, is pragmatism's unfinished business. Through the sheer vitality of their running exchange, Rorty and Putnam rescued pragmatism from near oblivion, almost as a by-product of their quarrels. They invented, perhaps without meaning to, a more fundamental contest between pragmatism and analytic naturalism than could have been drawn from the work of the classic pragmatists alone. But, in the process, they exhausted their own resources, and they now appear to be searching for a defensible perch of their own, without bothering any longer to define what pragmatism should mean.⁴⁶

It is logical to assume that Richard Rorty's controversial reforms of pragmatism are not the topic of discussion at most dinner tables. Nevertheless, his fame continues beyond debate or the printed page. His influence bears testimony to his doctrine lived out within the lives of his students, i.e. future leaders of America who will decide arguments concerning critical measures pertaining to law and moral convictions to what is reality and justice in a single vision.

A Living Narrative

Rorty has held teaching positions at Wellesley College, (a women's liberal arts college) ... Princeton University, is the fourth oldest institution of higher education in the United States. ... The University of Virginia often called UV or simply Virginia is

⁴⁵ Joseph Margolis, *Reinventing Pragmatism: American Philosophy at the End of the Twentieth Century*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), x.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 106-107.

a research university. Rorty is currently professor of comparative literature at Stanford University. His shift from philosophy to literature shows how he has come to believe that the discipline of philosophy is simply another form of literature.

Academic Awards

Rorty has received several academic awards and honors, including a Guggenheim Fellowship (1973-74) and a MacArthur Fellowship (1981-1986). He has held a number of prestigious lectureships, giving, among others, the Northcliffe Lectures at University College, London (1986), the Clark Lectures at Trinity College, Cambridge (1987), and the Massey Lectures at Harvard (1997).

Honors

There are some highly respected thinkers who have expressed their intellectual debt to Rorty. John McDowell, James Conant, and Rorty's former student Robert Brandom (highly respected thinkers in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy) applaud Rorty's determination to help in the realization to escape the concept that philosophy is necessary to bridge the supposed gap between our knowledge and the world. McDowell states it was because of him that I learned to think like that, yet "a piece of mere sanity" is missing from Rorty's account since Rorty he does not conclude that this means we must give up our notions of truth and objectivity altogether.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Rorty, *TCF*, 12-13.

Accomplishments

In the mid nineteen sixties, Rorty gained attention for his articulation of eliminative materialism (cf., "Mind-Body Identity, Privacy and Categories," 1965). He also edited, and wrote the introduction to "The Linguistic Turn" (1967, reissued with a new introduction in 1992). Though the introduction to the 1967 volume and the early papers in philosophy of mind show Rorty adopting frameworks for philosophical problems he has since dispensed with, these writings at the same time clearly bear the mark of the fundamental metaphilosophical attitude which becomes explicit in the next decade. In the "Preface" to "Pragmatism, and the Mirror of Nature," referring to Hartshorne, McKeon, Carnap, Robert Brumbaugh, Carl Hempel, and Paul Weiss, Rorty says, I was very fortunate in having these men as my teachers, but, for better or worse, I treated them all as saying the same thing: that a "philosophical problem" was a product of the unconscious adoption of a set of assumptions built into the vocabulary in which the problem was stated--assumptions which were to be questioned before the problem itself was taken seriously.⁴⁸

One of Rorty's greatest accomplishments is the consideration from other highly respected thinkers who are intellectually indebted to him⁴⁹ and he has enjoyed a small revival in the philosophical world he left behind. But McDowell feels "a piece of mere sanity" is missing from Rorty's account. Furthermore Rorty has influenced and

⁴⁸ Rorty, *PSH*, xiii.

⁴⁹ Highly respected thinkers in the field of "American Anglo-American Philosophy such as John McDowell, James Conant, and one of Rorty's former students Robert Brandom express their thanks to Rorty for his ability to "help them escape from the idea that we need philosophy to bridge the supposed gap to between our knowledge and the world." Ibid., 13-15.

reinvigorated many fields within the humanities and social sciences. His work has led to the renewal of debates about the public role of philosophy.⁵⁰

Richard Rorty is one of the most read philosophers in the United States, and while he is an opponent to many he is claimed as a friend to very few. His chief virtues are respect and hope. His central passion is to free philosophy from its ivory towers of the Ivy League, “where it has been sequestered since Immanuel Kant began to turn philosophy into an academic discipline.” Rorty has pursued one philosophical purpose in the past thirty years, namely, to demonstrate that pragmatism is not only one of the most important philosophical contributions to have emerged from the American experience, but that it synthesizes the philosophical and scientific advances made in the West over the past few centuries and his dogma challenges our society to return to its pragmatic roots and to reevaluate philosophical concepts of the past in order to transition into a hope filled future.

The mindset of the enlightenment has failed having left the door of Pandora’s Box open to the possibility that America will once again find its purpose, direction, and hope. It would seem that America is ripe for the choosing being open to new ideas or philosophies of life that will stimulate freedom and in some way redeem her social, political, and moral soul. Enter the Prophet of the New Pragmatism purveyor of a new social conscience.

⁵⁰ Ibid., xii.

MESSENGER OF THE NEW PRAGMATISM

It is hard to digest the fact that Rorty “a heavy-moving man with a snowy drift of hair and dark, impish eyebrows,” characterized as shy, gentle mannered, a lover of humming birds, is the same man who is widely denounced for being cynical, nihilistic, deeply irresponsible, and has increasingly turned from the scholarly criticism of philosophy toward the public espousal of what he calls social hope.⁵¹

There is nothing easy to approaching the philosophical claims of Rorty, although this may prove the purity of his personal convictions and radical pragmatist views. Yet his views challenge us to reevaluate the means and discipline of philosophy from an academic and personal perspective and seem always to challenge us with the question what if he is right.

Rorty may be defined by this twist-o-flex allusiveness, not only is he difficult to follow, he habitually eludes himself let alone his critics.⁵² Confusion is often found his narrative style. Rorty believes all human life demands to be heard, and the treasures of life experiences when solidified as a system of individual or communal beliefs are worthy guides to establish a trustworthy reality, and to neglect such systems or values is to neglect the individuals or groups that hold them. One may often experience Rortyan narrative as either defending his views or reconstructing the meaning of terminology or eliminating it. He frequently privileges himself to speak on the behalf of deceased philosophers who cannot defend their positions. Rorty may feel he is providing rational evidence that justifies his continual humanitarian evolution. Thus

⁵¹ Ibid., 1-3.

⁵² At times Rorty alludes himself: “So I do not know how to give anything like a conclusive argument for the view which my critics call ‘relativism’ and which I prefer to call ‘antifoundationalism’ or ‘antidualism’” Margolis, *Reinventing Pragmatism*, xxxii.

Rorty may seem to follow a logical sequence of thinking on one hand but eludes understanding on the other.

He is gifted in ducking, weaving, and laying smoke,⁵³ i.e. making statements and then taking them back. As a “militant antiauthoritarian” he breaks with traditional pragmatic doctrine yet seeks “to keep pragmatism pure” and “preserve our existence.” He suggests that we see what happens when we attempt to draw full conclusions from his consistent atheist position.⁵⁴

Rorty does not follow a true course when it comes to traditional argumentation of his philosophic views, rather he seeks to undermine the entire business of argumentation all together, or better said he does not play by the rules of traditional methodological inquiry or a communicative style that seems logical. He redefines concepts or criticism, including correspondence and representation theories of truth, since everything is relative until it is interpreted by the will of the individual. He plays a type of dodge ball with words seeking to hide behind terms and using other terms that are obsolete. His redefinitions include: objective truth = inter-subjective agreement and coherent = familiar. “Rorty simplifies the thesis of his opponents, and then mocks his straw men with the jejune device of capitalization.”⁵⁵

⁵³ “It is important to see that Rorty’s claims about what philosophy can do are based on a rather austere, minimalist conception of what one can possibly say in talking about things. Guignon, *Richard Rorty*, 11.

⁵⁴ Richard Rorty, *TAP*, 48-49.

⁵⁵ Rorty rejects, or reductively redefines, conceptual dualisms such as “truth and falsehood,” “proof and fallacy,” “evidence and guesswork,” “clarity and ambiguity,” “coherence and contradiction,” and “validity and non-validity.” Jenny Teichman, *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers*, New Criterion Volume 17, no. 1 (1998): 60.

Another tactical defense of Rorty is to claim the term “argument” is an ambiguous personal term.⁵⁶ Therefore, “one should not bother discussing serious matters because many questions are idle notions which cannot be conceivably answered such as ontology because it “resembles theology, as a waste of time,” and “it is not something that people care about any more.”⁵⁷

We have purposed to lay the foundation concerning the difficulty of presenting a clear image of Rorty in his philosophical context while discovering his passion to eliminate barriers, generally linguistic barriers, hindering philosophers from having a clear sense of reality and truth. The following segment will present Rorty’s philosophic model as a web of beliefs as basic signposts frequently found within the Rortyan philosophic system; three will be briefly explained here: postmodernism, relativism, and pragmatism.

The Rortyan Philosophic Model – A Bird’s Eye View

The term postmodernism is positioned within the outer bands of the web supporting core concepts of neo-pragmatism. For this reason the term is depicted having broadly defined characteristics or meanings through a tethered system of resilient elastic like cords consisting of anti-modern constructs such as re-contextualization, re-description, and reconstructive themes.

⁵⁶ Note: Rorty seeks to disown the term “argument” as a moral disagreement or as a language game of power, but in intellectual discussions, it refers to reasoning in its various modes: syllogism, the principles used in mathematical proofs, statements of probability, references to empirical evidence and lists of illustrative examples. It may also to mere disagreement; thus exchanges of the form “You did” – “I didn’t.” Ibid.

⁵⁷ Rorty, *CIS*, 169.

These themes guard it from being torn away by storms of critical (objective) evaluation, all of which add to the dilemma of accurately defining postmodernism and the allusive style of Rortyan philosophy.⁵⁸

Rortyan Postmodernism

Postmodernism for Rorty is “word too fuzzy to convey anything”⁵⁹ never having “a clear sense, and should be dropped from our philosophic mindset.”⁶⁰ It is generally identified with a “mindless and stupid cultural relativism” where “any fool thing that calls itself culture is worthy of respect.” Rorty is convinced that the term has lost its purity and usefulness for the philosophic academy having mutated through overuse. However, the term “postmodernism” retains a historic emblematic value for “patriotic reasons.”⁶¹ Thus Rorty describes himself as a “Postmodern Bourgeois Liberal,”⁶² a disciple of John Dewey⁶³ whom he calls “Postmodern before his time.”⁶⁴ It may be

⁵⁸ “The term postmodern primarily refers to time rather than a distinct ideology,” and “teaches that meaning is created by the individual.” Postmodernism is generally understood as a “cultural sensibility without absolutes, fixed certainties, of foundations, and delights in pluralism, and divergence.” It aims is to “think through the radical ‘situatedness’ of all human thought. In each of these matters, it may be regarded as a conscious and deliberate reaction against the totalization of the enlightenment project and to give a full definition of postmodernism is virtually impossible.” Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 19, 48, 184-189.

⁵⁹ Rorty, *PSH*, 276.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 263.

⁶¹ This is an example of Rorty’s personal hermeneutic style to deconstruct or reconstruct terminology necessary for the development of human solidarity. Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 160 - 169.

⁶² This statement “exemplifies such thinking that postmodernist ethics reject both universalism of pre-modern ethics based on divine revelation and modernist ethical projects stemming from the ethical insights and principles of unaided human reason. Douglas Groothuis, *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity against the Challenges of Postmodernism*, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 151.

⁶³ Richard Rorty admires John Dewey as the father of American Pragmatism and an author who theorized about education. One of his better-known theories is the notion that an important function of schools, at least in democratic America, is to socialize children, to make

significant in keeping with Rorty's devotion to American traditional pragmatism that he regards postmodernism as a term proceeding from European descent via Michael Foucault and others.⁶⁵

The Postmodern Two Step

Critics may respect Rorty's catchphrase assessment of postmodernism much the same way the term religion houses an umbrella of spiritualized categories, but the same consideration cannot be granted his denial of a postmodernist label nor taking personal liberty at a stroke of the pen to send it into the archives of historic terminology.⁶⁶ Nevertheless Richard Rorty is a postmodernist. His neo-pragmatism mirrors postmodernism's collage of meanings and traditions common to European postmodern thought in the following ways: he is an analytic philosopher – advocating the analysis of language as the heart of philosophy,⁶⁷ and he is an existentialist – meaning is not found but made by a social group and its language.⁶⁸ His values are antifoundational the philosopher cannot set forth “first principles” or canons of rationality providing for

them good citizens. A consequence of that idea, in America and else where, has been the production of over-socialized adults. Teichman, *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers*, 60.

⁶⁴ Richard Rorty, *Objectivity Relativism and Truth: Philosophical Papers*, (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 201.

⁶⁵ Rorty, *PSH*, 48.

⁶⁶ Richard Rorty is adept in his freedom to reconstruct terminology for his own purposes. He denies the title postmodernist but supports postmodern philosophy. Rorty states: I think postmoderns' are philosophically right but politically silly and that the Orthodox are philosophically wrong as well as politically dangerous. *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶⁷ Rorty's key tenant in: Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁶⁸ The existentialists do not deny objective science but it is not as important as subjectivism. A key issue for the American Pragmatist Tradition is the insistence truths are made - are artificial rather than natural – and can be un-made by using different vocabulary than that which the philosophical tradition has used. Rorty, *CIS*, xxii.

foundational discovery of truth; and he is antimetaphysical – humanity cannot attain a perspective outside the world.⁶⁹ He is a relativist – the belief that there are no universal absolutes.⁷⁰ As an antirealist – he abandons the concept of an objective world consisting of knowledge and truth.⁷¹ As an antiessentialist – he believes humanity is historically conditioned “all the way down” having no identifiable soul or self to stand out from the conditioning environment.⁷² As a nominalist, - he believes that universal forms or ideas exist only conceptually; all that exist in the real world are particulars.⁷³ As an Atheist – he believes the world view that God does not exist and nothing exists outside of nature.⁷⁴ As an evolutionary utopian – he welcomes progressivism and evolutionary themes - that which is right aids human development and that which is wrong hinders it.⁷⁵ He rejects universal absolutes and platonic dualisms - a world view which teaches the existence of two ultimate realities such as good and evil, or Spirit and matter.⁷⁶ Thus, Richard Rorty may wish to drop postmodernism from his philosophic reparatory to retain his ordination as a traditional American pragmatist but he is a postmodernist at heart.

⁶⁹ Rorty, *COP*, 165.

⁷⁰ Rorty's key tenant in: Rorty, *PSH*.

⁷¹ Rorty, *COP*, xvi - xvii.

⁷² Rorty, *CIS*, 99.

⁷³ Example: a word has no intrinsic meaning; it is merely a concept, the regular use of a mark or noise. Thus the pragmatist postmodernist's question is “what vocabulary works better than the others for the purpose we have in view. Rorty, *COP*, 163.

⁷⁴ Rorty, *PSH*, 169-173.

⁷⁵ The central tenant of evolutionary ethics is that right is what aids in evolutionary development of humanity; wrong hinders it. Rorty, *CIS*, xvi, xix.

⁷⁶ Rorty, *COP*, 160-166.

The Neo-Pragmatist Web – Relativism

The second Signpost is represented by relativism as the belief that there are no absolutes, located on the Rortyan web between postmodernism and the pragmatist core. Its key function defines postmodernism and enhances pragmatic skepticism and progressivism.

The modern (traditional) usage of the term relativism maintained a somewhat singular identity offering value meanings to enhance individuality and personal taste with slogans such as: “to each their own” or “everyone has a right to their own opinion,” but like postmodernism has not escaped re-contextualization. Postmodernity rejects modernity’s slogans such as “will to power” or “might makes right and justice is the interest of the stronger”⁷⁷ arguing that such terminology is reminiscent of individualism in the wake of humanity’s failures: two world wars, the cold war, Korea, and Vietnam. Social bias and ethnic unrest has resulted in a paradigmatic shift from modernity’s individuality of personal autonomy to finding one’s personal identity with a tribal enclave each having its own language, beliefs, values, and traditions. Rorty Says:

The point of social organization is to let everybody have a chance at self-creation to the best of his or her abilities, and that the goal requires, besides peace and wealth, the standard 'bourgeois freedoms'.⁷⁸

Thus a re-contextualization of the relativistic individuality of modernism’s statement: “to each their own” must be replaced by communal terminology such as

⁷⁷ Rorty, *PSH*, 27.

⁷⁸ Rorty, *CIS*, 84.

“who has the right to judge or say what is true.” This grants political status to special interest groups from the Christian right to the Liberal left.

Rortyan Relativism

At first glance Rorty does well to define relativism in the traditional pernicious sense of his critics: “every belief on a certain topic or perhaps about any topic is as good as every other,” but contextually Rorty uses relativism in an innocuous sense to justify his view that “no one holds that view if there were any relativists they would be easy to refute.”⁷⁹ His bait and switch language game is devised to eliminate the bugbear of relativism, and in characteristically Rortyan fashion seeks the elimination of platonic dualisms such as relative or absolute, made or found hindering philosophical progress toward a coherent story of human consensus.⁸⁰

The Relativistic Demise

Rorty seeks to escape the spider to the fly entrapment of his own scheme⁸¹ decrying the relativist stigma of objectivist bullies (critics); his tribal name is pragmatist, his religion pragmatism, and his war cry “We.” This writer assumes Rorty uses the plural for the purpose of identifying with his followers, but Rorty who

⁷⁹ “Rorty is a relativist without giving up on the possibility of meaningful evaluation; he is ethnocentric with tolerance instead of dogmatism; he is a liberal relying on democracy instead of philosophy; and he is pragmatist comfortable with contingency and solidarity instead of theories.” Guignon, *Richard Rorty*, 28.

⁸⁰ Rorty, *PSH*, xv.

⁸¹ Rorty detests Platonic dualisms such as absolute and relative. He denies he is a relativist claiming there is no truth in it but condemns himself to the either/or argument of the correspondence theory of truth. He cannot be a relativist without having an absolute of his own. This means he is absolutely certain he is not a relativist. He fools himself stating truth is derived from within itself not from its correspondence with (solidarity) the real truth out there. Here he becomes trapped within his own argument. Rorty, *ORT*, 24.

candidly uses names fails to give a record to who his followers may be.⁸² Rorty continues his argument by stating that relativists have differently defined concepts than pragmatists who define themselves in negative terms such as: anti-Platonists, anti-metaphysicians, or anti-foundationalists.”⁸³

The Rortyan Argument

The Rortyan argument is simply pragmatic nihilism removing all limits and standards. In a sense Rorty calls us to strip ourselves of past traditions which may include anything from moral dignity to proper attire. Rorty diagnoses change for a society that has been ill-formed by the modern era, and his relativism allows a freedom of expression without recourse, that is, within a reasonable construct. Rorty argues that

⁸² Note: Rorty seems to have an obsession the plural “We,” but who the ‘we’ are remains a mystery. One can only assume his followers or my side, but his radical neo-pragmatism does not always ring true with classical pragmatists who label him a maverick who systematically scavengers philosophy for his own taste. A few examples are: “we followers of Nietzsche,” “we supporters of Davidson,” “we pragmatists,” “we twentieth century philosophers,” “we modern thinkers” or “we no longer believe in God.” Expressions like these are numerous; line upon line, here a little there a little.

⁸³ Rorty argues that he is a pragmatist not a relativist, making the distinction between the two. A relativist such as William James holds that the “true” is simply the expedient in the way of believing and to those who agree with Thomas Kuhn that science should not be thought of as moving towards an accurate representation of the way the world is in itself.” He also makes the claim that those who do not accept the “Greek distinction” (Rorty) between the way things are and in themselves and the relations which they have to other things and in particular to human needs and interests. Rorty argues the fallibility of the relativist philosopher is their reliability upon traditional philosophy to measure their findings, that is, to find something stable or unconditional which will “serve as a criterion for judging the transitory products of our transitory needs and interests.” On the other hand a true “American pragmatist” like John Dewey will arguably “eschew” the traditional philosophic approach as a deterrent subject to conditional ideologies of the past, i.e. stability. The Pragmatist seeks skepticism as a pathway to growth and would rather be identified as naturalists who believe in a commonsensical approach to knowledge that comes from “inside of us.” Although some argue that the pragmatist is subjectively inclined “we” pragmatists believe reality comes from within and knowledge flows from the center of our being. Thus skepticism is an open minded value and is a tool to distinguish words and terminology to enhance an evolving political (also moral) economic condition of the present rather than to represent the intrinsic nature of past ideologies. Rorty, *PSH*, xvi-xxiii.

the enlightenment has provided evidence that personal autonomy is dangerous and humanity is in need of a global community. The global community is positioned to redefine mutable absolutes toward what Rorty defines as “final language” giving structure without exacting criterion by which to evolve.

There is no super community such as humanity itself with whom we can identify. What we should do is be frankly ethnocentric and take the standards of our community as the standards to be accepted because there can be no more objective set of moral values to which our loyalties can be directed. There just are no super cultural standards to be appealed to nor can there be. There is in morality "no appeal beyond the relative merits of various actual or proposed communities to impart criteria which help us weight those merits" ... There is in morality “no appeal beyond the relative merits of various actual proposed communities to impartial criteria which help us weight those merits.”⁸⁴

The Rortyan Strategy

The Rortyan strategy is to move prospective claims of knowledge and abstract thinking to a type of think tank that would bring order from chaos toward solidification by means of using leading officers or therapeutic philosophers who take the place of pastors and priests in order to guide relevant topics, ideas, or claims to experiential values that need to be processed into community life.

In short, my strategy for escaping the self-referential difficulties into which ‘the relativist’ keeps getting himself is to move everything over from epistemology and metaphysics into cultural politics, from claims to knowledge and appeals to self-evidence to suggestions about what we should try.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Kai Nielson, *After the Demise of the Tradition: Rorty, Critical Theory, and the Fate of Philosophy*, (Westview Press, Boulder, Co., 1991), 153- 154 [book on line] from; <http://www.-questa.com>

⁸⁵ Rorty, *TAP*, 57.

We need to: “Hook up” views about “democracy, mathematics, physics, God, and everything else, into a coherent story about how everything hangs together.”⁸⁶

What really matters are not dualisms such as right and wrong, relative or absolute but our loyalty:

Is to other human beings clinging together against the dark, not our hope of getting things right. Furthermore “we cannot justify our beliefs in physics, ethics or any other area only those who benefits overlap ours to some appropriate extent.”⁸⁷

These are all recognizable relativist views. Justified in telling us what should be done, what is right or good, and none suggest that we cannot know what we ought to do or what is good. The terms loyalty, solidarity, relativism, and coherence absolutely demand a criterion for behavior. Rorty’s commitment to a given family resembling solidarity does not remove the necessity of absolute and relative dualisms by nature of justified inquiry or group consensus. Individuals must beware that whether or not Rorty substitutes what he calls harmful linguistic concepts for harmless ones he remains a relativist building mythical ladders of water whose foundation is the sea.

Rortyan Moral Relativity

Moral absolutists claim Rorty’s system provides insufficient data for moral decision making. His moral relativism is simply a self-improvement course for disaster.⁸⁸ This is a try it and like it mentality without guidelines:

A liberal society is one which is content to call “true” whatever the upshot of such encounters turns out to be. That is why a liberal society is badly served by an attempt to supply it with ‘philosophical foundations.’ For the attempt to

⁸⁶ Rorty, *COP*, 168.

⁸⁷ Rorty, *ORT*, 31.

⁸⁸ Richard Rorty agrees with Frederick Nietzsche that truth is the will to be the master of the multiplicity of sensations. Rorty, *PSH*, xvi.

supply such foundations presupposes a natural order of topics and arguments which is prior to, and overrides the results of, encounters between old and new vocabularies.⁸⁹

Fuzzy Philosophizing

Rorty's fuzzy philosophy is recognizable by his establishment of a straw man consisting of inadequate check-and-balance methods for consistent moral behavior.

He then knocks the straw man down by backpedaling and second guessing himself:

My discussion of relativism may seem to have ducked the real issues. Perhaps nobody is a relativist. Perhaps "relativism" is not the right name for what so many philosophers find so offensive in pragmatism. But surely there is an important issue around somewhere. There is indeed an issue, but it is not easily amenable to argument.⁹⁰

Neo-Pragmatism the third signpost within the Rortyan web of beliefs

This is the heart, the life blood, of Rortyan philosophy. Its webbing may be defined as a dense patchwork of interrelated strands common to philosophic humanism supported by relativism; and sheltered beneath postmodernisms umbrella of catchphrases, myths and misguided truths.

The Rortyan Pragmatic Structure

The Rortyan pragmatic structure consists of existentialism, anti-essentialism, utilitarianism, anti-representational coherence rather than correspondence theory, anti-platonic, anti-dualistic themes. It is naturalistic, optimistic, religious, melioristic (progressive and democratic), and views scientific intelligence as a means of human

⁸⁹ Rorty, *CIS*, 52.

⁹⁰ Rorty, *COP*, 169.

achievement.⁹¹ It differs from traditional forms of epistemology defined in static (fixed), eternal (absolute), and spectator terms.

Traditional Pragmatism Defined

Pragmatism is a practical hypothesis or system of ideas employed to aid humanity in adjusting to its environment by utilizing our unique reasoning ability for problem solving to gain pragmatic certainty - epistemological reflection measuring consequences of right and wrong actions by utilization of the natural sciences, theory of meanings and history of truths. Thus if something has beneficial consequences, it is true or right if it has aided humanity to cope with life experience.⁹²

Rortyan Neo-Pragmatism Defined

Rorty asserts pragmatism is “a vague, ambiguous, and overworked word. Nevertheless, it names the chief glory of American intellectual tradition and provides “the greatest good for the greatest number of people.”⁹³ It is “the doctrine that there are no constraints on inquiry save conversational ones, no wholesale constraints derived from the nature of objects, of the mind, or of language, but only those retail constraints provided by the remarks of our fellow inquirers.” Thus the pragmatist

⁹¹ Norman L. Geisler, *Is Man the Measure? : An Evaluation of Contemporary Humanism*, (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1983), 56.

⁹² At the heart of pragmatism is a radical reinterpretation of the nature of knowledge. Because the pragmatist views human beings as constantly interacting with the adapting to their environment, he considers all knowledge to be practical (This practical approach has led many to call pragmatism anti-intellectual. N. Geilser, *Introduction*, 115 – 121.

⁹³ Rorty, *COP*, 160-165.

community of Ironists or liberal society is one which is content to call “true whatever the upshot.”⁹⁴

The Rortyan Pragmatic Hope

The neo-pragmatist hope is to replace the reality appearance distinction with the distinction between more useful and less useful. So we say that vocabulary of Greek metaphysics and Christian theology “the ontological tradition” or existential knowledge must be replaced with hope since hope cannot be found out there somewhere. But what is hope in the context of the Rortyan scheme.

Hope in the Rortyan sense of the word is void of metaphysical, transcendent, or historicist moorings, and appears to represent a view of the world that resembles optimism rather than hope. The difficulty presents itself as Rorty seeks to support his argument appealing to Dewey and Havel (two heroes) whom Rorty feels reflect the same views by their repudiation of certainty in history, and for their attraction to political progressivism, but a closer look will reveal radically differing approaches, Dewey argues for optimism without hope, i.e. the disposition that human problems are tractable without needing to resort to any appeals to transcendence or the divine in their solution. On the other hand Havel’s position can be described as hope without optimism, i.e. a fundamental mistrust in the belief that humans have the ability to solve political and moral problems, but the appeal to a transcendent source—through hope—

⁹⁴ Rorty, *PSH*, 28-35.

can serve as a guiding standard, as well as an encouragement to action, but at the same time a source for humility and caution in the attempt.⁹⁵

Hope in the Rortyan sense of the word coincides with Emerson that truth is not an important factor in the development of humanity, but hope must be the catalyst to sustain the drive of the human will. Dewey likewise concurs that hope is the central meaning of growth consisting of the human ability to take control of evolutionary circumstances, to produce, protect, and educate humanity for the advancement of a morally progressive social structure.

Hope is the ability to believe that the future will be unspecifiably different from, and unspecifiably freer than, the past is the condition of growth ... that sort of hope was all that Dewey himself offered us, and by offering it he became our century's Philosopher of Democracy.⁹⁶

Rorty also concurs with Vaclav Havel's understanding of hope as a deep sense of hope or an internal groundless hope not relying on any belief in inevitability through history or transcendence outside it, and it is likely Rorty concludes that such hope is "social" since our efforts can only be directed at the improvement of society, not its transformation according to any "objective" rational.⁹⁷

The kind of hope I often think about (especially in situation that are particularly hopeless, such as prison) I understand above all as a state of mind, not a state of the world. Either we have hope within us or we don't it is a dimension of the soul, and it's not essentially dependent on some particular observation of the world or estimate of the situation. Hope is not prognostication.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Deneen, *Politics of Hope*, 579.

⁹⁶ Rorty, *PSH*, 120-121.

⁹⁷ Rorty, *Truth*, 236.

⁹⁸ Vaclav Harvel, *Disturbing the Peace*, (New York: Vintage, 1991), 181.

Rorty may correctly interpret Havel but Rorty's selectiveness of Havel's position in a passage not cited by Rorty leads toward an uncertain irreconcilability between Rorty and Havel, that is, Havel's distinct perspective that hope transcends the world, is experienced, is unconditional in nature, and cannot be explained:

Hope transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons. I don't think you can explain it as a mere derivative of something here, of some movement, or of some favorable sign in the world. I feel that its deepest roots are in the transcendental just as the roots of human responsibility are, though of course I can't – unlike Christians, for instance – say anything concrete about the transcendental.⁹⁹

Havel's interpretation of hope, on the surface tickles the Rortyan ear pertaining to the inexplicableness of the transcendent. But Rortyan and Havelan perspectives on the matter take differing forms, i.e. Havel's hope "makes sense" and "is without optimism" and the Rortyan hope is groundless and amorphous or unstructured."

Furthermore Havel identifies different meanings for the terms hope and optimism than Rorty's confused distinctions:

Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction to the world – optimism. It is not the conviction that things will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out." ... I think that the deepest and most important hope, the only one that can keep us above water and urge us to good works, and the only true source of the breathtaking dimension of the human spirit and its efforts, is something we get, as it were, from 'elsewhere.'¹⁰⁰

This may be called the Rortyan empty hope method; since there is no set standard or guideline for hope to be measured whether it is a deep internal hope or a hopeful assumption. It has no frame of reference for future generations to adjust to the concept of progressive cultural evolution of humanity.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

The Rortyan empty hope method assumes an inherent value system within humanity to choose good over evil without considering a higher value of hope that transcends the finitude of the human existence. Thus Pandora's Box becomes the substance of a hopeful future and evil has a captive audience that is inextricably linked to the metaphysical battle of good and evil across time and space.

The Rortyan Pragmatist Purpose

Rorty seeks to remove inessential ladders – ancestral tools of reasoning such as categories or principles found especially within Platonic argumentation or dualisms those distinctions between terms such as found vs. made, reality vs. artificial, absolute vs. relative, object vs. subject, nature vs. convention, reality vs. appearance, and mind vs. matter that have proven to be an obstacle of social solidarity hindering human potential and expression.¹⁰¹

He wishes to extend his assertion from linguistic signs to all objects in our discourse – to everything from quarks and tables to people and social institutions.¹⁰²

Rorty embraces Nominalism, meaning that he reject universals in philosophical doctrine. In other words there are no realities other than concrete objects.¹⁰³ Only particular objects exist, and properties, numbers, and sets are merely features of the

¹⁰¹ “Our Ancestors climbed the ladder which we now position to throw away.” Rorty, *PSH*, xxii.

¹⁰² Richard Rorty, *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 131-132.

¹⁰³ Note: Nominalism (Latin nominal, “of or pertaining to names”), in medieval Scholastic philosophy, doctrine stating that abstractions, known as universals, are without essential or substantive reality, and that only individual objects have real existence. These universals, such as animal, nation, beauty, circle, were held to be mere names, hence the term nominalism.

way of considering the things that exist. Sentences derive from places in a web of other sentences therefore getting things right becomes non-representational.

Rorty is highly skeptical of what he calls essential language and “whether or not the deployment of contingent vocabulary weakens our sense of solidarity,” believing terms such as metaphysic and transcendent should be discarded as valueless terms that no longer play a key role in developmental society. He counts the term reason as a non essential that hinders individual experimentation and progress.¹⁰⁴ His concept of morality follows Dewey’s understanding that morality is a vocabulary based upon poetic achievement, dependent upon cultural sources from which it is composed, and always contingent. According to Dewey, this is because morality becomes reified as moralists forget that it is grounded in a process of imagination and invention in the artful dance of organism and environment. When these narratives, theologies, or theories fail to sustain us they are either rejected or revised. “Truth,” then in the end, is imagining a successful strategy for addressing the tension between the needs of the individual and the problems of satisfying those needs in his or her biological and social development.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ “Reason is a ladder which ought to be thrown away in order to bring the liberal utopia into being.” Rorty, *COP*, 166-169.

¹⁰⁵ A pragmatist believes that human thinking and acting, from sophisticated theory to practical mechanics, are driven by the need to respond to problems: thought and action are provoked by tensions between ourselves as needy organisms and our environment that must satisfy these needs. Thinking and acting are aimed at reducing tensions and solving problems. Our most basic needs for food and shelter, for example, are addressed through patterns and programs of farming and building that are considered good, true, and even lovely only if they satisfy and sustain us. Likewise, we are perplexed by our deepest human longings and our most tragic losses, the primordial dialectic of death and desire. Rorty, *ORT*, 63-77.

THE METHOD: THEORY WITHOUT COMPROMISE

Rorty unlike Dewey sought to revive philosophy from a slumbering quagmire and has devalued if not jettisoned pragmatic philosophy in favor of conversational cultural criticism.¹⁰⁶

Rorty argues against traditional pragmatic theorists that the mind represents nature or external reality, substituting an extreme form of material existentialism to necessitate his new society of reformatted well programmed machines working in harmony to eliminate the ills of humanity¹⁰⁷ for the reason that human body is analogous to computer hardware and the beliefs and desires analogous to the computers software. Thus the proper question to ask is not what beliefs an individual carries but whether they are best habits of action for gratifying our desires.¹⁰⁸

This is the “Star Trek Next Generation” theory comprised of cybernetic creatures part organic and part machine called the Borg – a society comprised of invincible beings committed to a solitary society of thought, purpose, and destiny whose mission is to painlessly educate or assimilate inferior species into the Collective as their quest for perfection. The Borg easily simulates Rortyan solidarity described as the collective, (a single cohesive body of individual creatures, beings who have been assimilated into

¹⁰⁶ Rorty, *PSH*, 95.

¹⁰⁷ Pragmatism is the doctrine that there are no constraints on inquiry save conversational ones, no wholesale constraints derived from the nature of objects, or of the mind, or of language, but only those retail constraints provided by the remarks of our fellow inquirers. Rorty, *COP*, 165-166.

¹⁰⁸ Rorty, *PSH*, xxiv-xxv.

the Collective as a solidarity harmonious unit, working together to bring others into its civilized and undisruptive tranquility.¹⁰⁹

The Rortyan Neo-Pragmatic Controversy

Rorty's neo-pragmatism is not well received by his contemporaries or by traditional scientific philosophers, most likely over deep difference in their conceptions of what philosophy can and ought to do. Contemporary pragmatists brand Rorty a maverick irrational, and irresponsible - as someone who went through a transformation from bona fide analytical philosopher to something else perverting the purity of the doctrine he seeks to revive:

Frank B. Farrell argues that Rorty "fails to appreciate Davidson's theory of how communication between agents occurs" ... John McDowell says Rorty's view "of causality runs foul of the notion that our concept of a creature with beliefs involves the idea of a rational constraint of the world on our epidemic states" ... Hilary Putnam and Susan Haack criticize Rorty's "abandonment of

¹⁰⁹ In Star Trek Mythology the Borg represents a race of cybernetically enhanced humanoids from the Delta Quadrant. Their bodies contain cybernetic implants, the purpose of which is to give them a distinct technological advantage over the many inferior species they encounter. Virtually nothing is known of Borg culture in the usual sense. All Borg are apparently interconnected with all other Borg, and the concept of individuality is apparently destructive to this organization.

Their symbol, the stylized claw over a background of circuitry, defines who they are; an amalgam of organic with synthetic. They strive toward perfection wishing to improve themselves for the sum total of the collective.

They are outfitted with specialized hardware so that specific tasks can be performed. Furthermore, they are connected to each other via a sophisticated subspace communications network, forming a group consciousness which is called The Collective.

Their mission is to educate newly assimilated drones in science, technology, and other areas of scholarship that will best serve The Collective in their evolutionary quest for perfection by assimilating the culture and technology of various races throughout the galaxy; they seek to improve the overall quality of life for all species.

It is the goal of the society for every inferior species to be assimilated into The Collective. By assimilating the culture and technology of various races throughout the galaxy, they seek to improve the overall quality of life for all species. Assimilation is a swift and "painless" procedure, and can be accomplished on a large scale. Preparation is irrelevant. Self-determination is irrelevant. You must comply. Resistance is futile. All species will ultimately become one with the Borg. <http://grove.ufl.edu/~locutus/Bit/history.html>

basic concepts of traditional epistemology are symptoms of a vulgar cynicism, contributing to the decline of reason and intellectual integrity characteristic of much contemporary thought.¹¹⁰

Mainline philosophers are dubious of the Rortyan philosophical code claiming to be instinctively an American philosophy: Teichman feels Rortyan pragmatism will accentuate the will to power and violence between established peer groups rather than a progressive dialogue based upon tolerance. Others sense Rortyan views will result in the loss of the American soul, i.e. the ability to logically think through critical problems thus solved by juvenile decision making and risking the moral health and fiber of the nation.

Teichman states: “Neo-pragmatism is a philosophy for gangs and peer groups. It is a philosophy of “We.”¹¹¹

Lovitt says: “This doctrine consists of the reduction of Americanism to a world of raw material, thinking to planning, and displays pragmatism as the juvenile American interpretation of Americanism.”¹¹²

Bernard Russell claims: Pragmatism is a shallow philosophy, suitable for an immature country.¹¹³

Rorty must be mistaken by saying: “Allen Bloom and Michael Moore seem to be the only people who still think neo-pragmatism is a danger to moral health of our society.”¹¹⁴

Stanley Fish, a radical deconstructionist philosopher, whom Rorty believes is on the same page, questions Rorty’s neo-pragmatism, according to Fish “all we have left

¹¹⁰ Bjorn Ramberg, Richard Rorty: The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, (Summer 2002 Edition, Edward N. Zalta (ed), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2002/-entries/Rorty/>

¹¹¹ Teichman argues that Rorty’s overuse of the plural “We.” Jenny Teichman, *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers*, New Criterion, Volume 17. Issue: 1, 60 [magazine on line]; available from Questa Media America, Inc. www.questia.com.

¹¹² Rorty, *PSH*, 28, quoting, William Lovitt, “Heidegger, The Age of the World Picture:” *The Question Concerning Technology*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 15.

¹¹³ Ibid., 23.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 95.

is power, politics and persuasion.” If Fish is right, given his premise, it is necessary to recover our theological underpinnings and good judgment concerning truth that we may survive the age of power, politics, and persuasion.¹¹⁵

THE MESSAGE: RORTY’S THE HUMANIST MANIFESTO

Eight Points of Rortyan Neo-Pragmatic Humanism

Humanism may be defined as – the establishment of humanity as the highest value in the universe since the added ingredient called reason or intelligence is superior to the sort of cunning which the lower anthropoids have manifested.¹¹⁶

There are eight points of the humanist manifesto which will be discussed in reference to Rortyan pragmatism:

First: Rorty is Atheistic Regarding God’s Existence

The religious humanist as we will call them, disregard metaphysical means for the creation of the universe. Thus the universe is self existing, self sufficient, and not in need of an absolute sovereign to sustain or rule it. Thus Rorty is a religious humanist and defends his “faith” by the literature he reads.

“Literature sustains his atheist faith;”¹¹⁷ “God is a contrivance;”¹¹⁸ there is no “description of how things are from a God’s point of view,”¹¹⁹ and “I fear we shall be unable to get rid of God, save we still believe in grammar.”¹²⁰

Second: Rorty is Naturalistic Regarding the Possibility of Miracles

¹¹⁵ Stanley Fish, *There’s No Such Thing as Free Speech*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

¹¹⁶ Rorty, *PSH*, 64.

¹¹⁷ Rorty, *CIS*, 171.

¹¹⁸ Rorty, *PSH*, 84.

¹¹⁹ Rorty, *ORT*, 13.

¹²⁰ Rorty, *COP*, 229.

Rorty is a strong advocate of Charles Darwin's teachings on evolution and may be described as one of Rorty's heroes of the faith. Rorty believes that humanity is a natural part of nature having evolved through progressive evolution and regards two beliefs as vital to the cause – naturalism and evolutionism. Naturalism follows the prior point. If there is no Creator, it follows that there is no sovereign and if there is no sovereign there is no need to believe in the supernatural or the miraculous. This verifies his statement concerning the progressive nature of the world as things that “shove us around” exerting “resistance” and “pressures” on humanity by their “blind impress:”¹²¹

Rorty is thankful for the advancement of civilization; especially Charles Darwin's findings that have provided evidence that humanity no longer needs to dwell on pointless subjects such as absolute laws from above. The human is no better other beasts of the field in constructing a reality unique to themselves. It is important therefore to recognize reality is passed down from generation to generation and is weighed by experience, fate, and final language to form the balance between what is made and discovered.

Rorty seeks to eliminate language pertaining to myth and fantasy including metaphysical language that pursues an enlightened Being “up there” rather than catching the vision of humanity's dream already evolving within the heart of each individual. Thus Rorty seeks to snatch humanity from old fashioned terminology that has no purpose:

¹²¹ The objects which Rorty refers to are what he calls brute, inhuman, causal stubbornness of philosophical objectivity and even claim that objectivity is very often cause us to hold beliefs and behavior. (One may also wish to research Pantheism). Rorty, *ORT*, 83.

The process of de-divinization of the world ideally, culminate in our no longer being able to see any use for the notion that finite moral, contingency existing human beings might derive the meaning of their lives from myths except other finite, mortal, contingently existing human beings.¹²²

He purposes to soften the gap between the scientific and theological camps to either solve mysteries or worship them. For Rorty this is a waste of time. Science cannot finalize casual forces and theology cannot establish a coherent argument pertaining to reality.

Science and theology represent two different attitudes toward the mysterious: One tries to solve mysteries and the other worship them. The first believes that mysteries may be made less mysterious even though they are not cleared up, and admits that there will always be mysteries. The second believes that some specific mysteries are final.¹²³

No organism, human or non-human, is ever more or less in touch with reality than any other organism. The very idea of being out of touch with reality presupposes the un-Darwinian, Cartesian picture of a mind which somehow swings free of the causal forces exerted on the body.¹²⁴

Third: Rorty is Evolutionary Concerning Man's Origin

Rorty concurs that naturalism defends the claim that the origin of humanity is defined by evolution, and rejects Platonic or traditional dualisms of mind and body providing for the belief that the human being is not immaterial, has no soul, will not live after death, and has no need for religion.

We pragmatists resent the suggestion that you have to be religious to have a conscience - a suggestion implicit in the fact that only religious conscience objectors to military service go unpunished. Such facts suggest to us that the claims of religion need, if anything to be pushed back still further and that

¹²² Rorty, *PSH*, 45.

¹²³ Rorty, *ORT*, 66.

¹²⁴ Rorty, *PSH*, xxiii.

religious belief have no business asking for public respect than they now receive.¹²⁵

Fourth: Rorty is Socialistic in Political View: Implying Cultural and Social Evolution

Rorty believes humanity's religious culture and civilization are products of progressive development. An individual born into a given culture will model the culture he or she has been bred, implying cultural evolution and cultural relativity. Cultural evolution means culture has become more complex or sophisticated. Cultural relativism says that individuals are shaped largely by their given culture.

Rorty's utopian concepts are a means to fulfill his quest to propose "intellectuals who care about social justice." ... The Communist Manifesto is in many ways is a superior book to offer the young than the flawed New Testament.¹²⁶

Fifth: Rorty is Relativistic Concerning Values – Humanity Determines its Own Values

Rorty's relativism asserts that science is unable to acceptably grant evidence for cosmic or supernatural guarantee of human values. Thus all human values are man made and not divine giving license to the notion that humanity is capable of making their own rules and changing or eradicating them altogether.

"Morals are a matter of conditioning,"¹²⁷ ... "Moral principles are abbreviations of past practices;" ... "The term moral obligation is less appropriate to the degree to which we identify with those whom we help"¹²⁸ ... and "Evil is merely a lesser good."¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Ibid., 169.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 201-209.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 15.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 79.

¹²⁹ Ibid., xxx.

Sixth: Rortyan Humanistic Pragmatism is Optimistic about the Future

Rorty is convinced that old paradigms or terminology such as faith, belief, hope, and salvation or philosophical linguistic formulations based upon reality, truth and objectivity, stating “truth is not out there.” He seeks to eliminate distinctions of traditional metaphysical significance. Those ladders that have lost their pazzaz having no practical use for today but pragmatic ladders free humanity to soar above the clouds.¹³⁰

The Rortyan hope is to construct a classless society familiar with Marxism, abolition of private entrepreneurship, and the establishment of a new global polity.¹³¹ Yet, Science is a key to maintaining future optimism – “Space exploration is more important than Christian Fundamentalism.”¹³²

Seventh: Rortyan Attitude toward Life

Rorty’s attitude toward life may be found in his sense of worth expressed by his love for wild Orchids juxtaposed to those hybrids which catch the eye of onlookers – translated, one’s attitude toward life must look beyond the beautiful to help the less fortunate. While such an attitude is to be praised Rorty looks beyond religion to freedom and hope to establish a solidarity that will satisfy what he feels religion has failed to do (to end human inequality) and to refine religion in purely humanistic terms by excluding God from the equation. Religion then consists of anything that is significant, interesting, or satisfying to humanity, and where the needs of the many outweigh the need of the few.

¹³⁰ Rorty, *Essays*, 9.

¹³¹ Rorty, *PSH*, 229-239.

¹³² *Ibid.*, xxv.

The Pragmatists desire to “diminish human suffering” and “increase human equality,” and the “human brotherhood.”¹³³

Eighth: Rortyan Method of Progressivism

The humanist, as Rorty, is this-worldly and dwells on the realization that the human personality is the end all of progressive evolution and takes responsibility to develop and fulfill its destiny in the here and now.

Rorty provides the human intellectual: Eleven Theses – Number three: instructs the humanities to instill doubts in students minds concerning self image, the society in which they belong, as well as constructing a new moral consciousness to life issues.¹³⁴

It is necessary to develop a new document of hope ... as soon as private property is abolished or as soon as we all take Jesus out of our hearts ... as moderns we are superior to the ancients – both pagan and Christian in our ability to imagine a utopia here on earth.¹³⁵

REALITY OF A NEW AGE

The world of reality in which Richard Rorty prescribes is piloted by analytic and linguistic philosophy.¹³⁶ The function of the analytic philosopher is to clarify, examine, and define basic presuppositions, inferences, and concepts of major areas of inquiry. The analytic method differs from traditional scientific norms of systematically explaining the world through carefully controlled observation and experimentation.¹³⁷

¹³³ Ibid., xxix.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 127.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 208.

¹³⁶ To rid our thinking of the vestiges of Cartesian philosophy, to become fully Darwinian in our thinking, we need to stop thinking of words as representations and to start thinking of them as nodes in the causal network which binds the organism together with its environment, i.e. language and inquiry are biologic in nature. Ibid., xiii.

¹³⁷ Clarification is a key component to the pursuing of truth, ambiguity leads to confusion. Analytic thinking is as essential to good philosophy as good instruments and clean hands are to a surgical operation. Ibid., 51.

Rorty's preference for analytic linguistics is essential to the neo-pragmatist quest for epistemological behavioral, communal, and organic freedom(s)¹³⁸ of the herd¹³⁹ - a stylistic and sociological unity.¹⁴⁰ His aim is to reduce the consensus of the analytic community to central problems of philosophy, i.e. concerned there are no discoveries of an antecedent reality which has been waiting to be unearthed by "analysis" or "reflection," to solve baffling questions pertaining to historic inferences of what contributors "really had in mind." The name of the game is the elimination of all linguistic distractions (language games) to open the entire universe of possible assertions in all inferential relationships and to construct or criticize any argument.¹⁴¹

Criticism

The fallacy of Rortyan hermeneutic for linguistic clarity is two fold. First, the analytic philosopher seems to spend too much time on tool-sharpening and hand washing that never gets around to the operation – language is simply language and words are simply words. Secondly, the placement of language as the masthead of philosophical research for the inquiry into inferential truth is insufficient. It establishes experience as a final court that judges meaning. "All experience proves is that one had an experience no matter how well an experience is described. There are always subsequent questions to the meaning and implications of the experience. Experience as

¹³⁸ Ibid., 266.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 119.

¹⁴⁰ Rorty states the analytic philosophic style is good. "It is the esprit de corps, among analytic philosophers is healthy and useful. Rorty, *COP*, 217.

¹⁴¹ Rorty recognizes the role played by humanity in the development of values and expansion of those qualities by the use of language "uttering sentences" to carrying out basic behavioral expression and to be able to "cope with their environment." Rorty, *COP*, 52, 219-223.

such is not self-verifying.”¹⁴² The world of reality in which Richard Rorty prescribes is piloted by folk psychology.

Rorty is skeptical of how modernity has conceived of or knows reality (dualistic epistemology), denying Platonic/Cartesian mind-body theorists who advocate a difference between being and nonbeing, the incompatibility of thinking substance (mind), and extended substance (matter), and their interaction in the human experience. Rorty, although unwilling to provide a workable solution for the conundrum, wishes to mend or demythologize the divide of transcendent and immanent domains¹⁴³ arguing “there is only one type of stuff which consists of the human organism”¹⁴⁴ (materialism), humanity cannot “climb out of our minds” or gain the independent place to do so, humanity cannot find “a skyhook – something which might lift us out of our beliefs”¹⁴⁵ to get the universe right, i.e. epiphenomenalism.¹⁴⁶

The Rortyan world of epistemology is one of human autonomy – the concrete is over the abstract; a type of material epiphenomenalism. Materialism allows Rorty to simplify his theory by eliminating the debate of the body-mind relationship since we are our bodies. Materialism also confirms his Darwinian views of behaviorism – as continuous with animal behavior; and death – (the cessation of bodily function) as the same.¹⁴⁷ Epiphenomenalism rejects parallelism and pre-established harmony between mind and body in a one-way causal relationship, i.e. physical effects establish the

¹⁴² Geisler, *Introduction*, 51.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁴⁵ Rorty, *ORT*, 13.

¹⁴⁶ Rorty systematizes extreme materialism and epiphenomenalism - a secondary phenomenon resulting from another Materialism that is to say extreme materialism – we are nothing more than our bodies. Rorty, *PSH*, xxv, 149.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

mental but not visa versa.¹⁴⁸ Rorty may agree somewhat to the interchange of body-mind but rejects causality. The keeper for Rorty in this respect is the physical world an autonomous system of matter ranging from the concrete physical to thought processes produced by chemicals, neurons, atoms, C-fibers, and the like.¹⁴⁹ He claims that someday humanity's evolution will advance to the point of explaining all things in the physical world – even human behavior – in terms of physical events and physical laws – even brain writing.¹⁵⁰

It may seem contradictory or oxymoronic to link materialism – lacking casuistic means with epiphenomenalism – embracing causal relationships of body and mind. In spite of this clarification may be employed through using folk psychology or what is known as commonsense psychology¹⁵¹ as an interweaving mediator.

This is the vocabulary of the mental and is a method of understanding or predicating behavior. Briefly folk psychology offers impressive achievements for any vocabulary and may be defined as:

The tag given to ordinary talk about a friend and does not refer to talk about biology of the brain and central nervous system; rather it refers to talk about beliefs and desires, intentions and fears, wishes and hopes. It is essentially the vocabulary we use to talk about and explain ourselves and others.¹⁵²

Common sense realism is a hand-in-glove theory for Rorty. First, it offers a contingency of freedoms - linguistic vocabularies, meanings, definitions,

¹⁴⁸ Geisler, *Introduction*, 180-191.

¹⁴⁹ Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope and the Mirror*, 17-127.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 27-35.

¹⁵¹ According to common sense realism, illusory objects are not independent of the mind, but are in some sense the product of it. Geisler, *Introduction*, 135.

¹⁵² Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope and the Mirror*, 97.

communication, and diminishes traditional analytic restrictions, - to return freedom to humanity's ability to test behavior, love justice, and hope for a greater future.¹⁵³

Folk psychology enables Rorty to envision the philosopher as a cultural therapist/psychologist, i.e. edifying philosopher.

[The pragmatist] should see themselves as working at the interface between the common sense of their community, a common sense much influenced by Greek metaphysics and by patriarchal monotheism ... they should see themselves as involved in a long term attempt to change the rhetoric, the common sense and the self image of their community.¹⁵⁴

Second, common sense realism diffuses modern stressors pertaining to reality distinction, metaphysics, problematic dualisms, i.e. made or found, absolute or relative, real or apparent, idealisms, and the unreal or unexplainable.

The unreal unexplainable, the illusory or hallucinated object is impossible to strip the human element from even our most abstract theorizing. All mental categories without exception have been evolved because of their fretfulness for life, and owe their being to historic circumstances just as do the nouns, verbs and adjectives in which clothe them.¹⁵⁵

Rorty's commonsense theory contends that physical objects are independent or external to the mind, although they are directly and immediately observable to it, truths are made not found, all things are sociologic constructs affirming Rortyan applied subjectivism – in ethics the belief that there are no objective, universal language principles of conduct.¹⁵⁶

A second criticism concerning materialism and epiphenomenalism follows: Materialism or extreme materialism is irrational. Rorty's commonsensical language

¹⁵³ Rorty, *CIS*, xiii- xiv.

¹⁵⁴ Richard Rorty, *Is Truth a Goal of Inquiry: Davidson vs. Wright*, *Philosophical Quarterly* 45 (1995): 281-300, quoted in Robert B. Brandom, *Rorty and His Critics*, (Malden, Ma: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2000), 42.

¹⁵⁵ Rorty, *PSH*, 150.

¹⁵⁶ Rorty, *CIS*, xiii.

provides our only access to objects.¹⁵⁷ One may ask since eternal objects having physical dimensions are eternal to the mind yet in direct contact with it, how can we be mistaken about an object that is real? He leads his students to believe that all that can be known of one's external reality is what commonsense language provides as true. He reduces the human to be of no more value than a substantial table, an external reality that only certain sentences are true of. This is what Pierce called the first invocation of the pragmatic principle.¹⁵⁸ Behavior also under the tutelage of Rortyan common sense language is merely commonsensical. We may praise or blame ourselves, "however it is absurd to ask (except in a very metaphorical way) which part of our body is guilty. The whole man seemingly is guilty and the whole man seems to be more than just a body." Furthermore, "epistemological predicates about belief and knowledge, truth or falsehood are impossible to determine solely on a material or physical basis. Epiphenomenalism may be criticized by the objection that mental events apparently are able to cause physical events such as a brain event that causes a wince also causes the sensation of pain."

Coherence Theory and hermeneutical behaviorism

The Rortyan world of human behaviorism begins with coherence or contextualization theory as a justified approach to behaviorism denying correspondence theorists foundational methods for justifying ethical constructs. We must note that there is a coherence theory of justification and a coherence theory of

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 55.

¹⁵⁸ Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope and the Mirror*, 55.

truth. These are not the same. We will first discuss the coherence theory of behavioral justification followed by the coherence theory of truth.

The Rortyan epistemic or justification for behaviorism is a type of coherence theory (a test for truth which considers self-consistency, morally determinative and socially constructed for the justification of beliefs) while deliberately avoiding the idea of proposing any specific theory of truth.¹⁵⁹

“Morality is socially constructed” ... “there are no absolute standards such as liberty, equality and fraternity, which can be proclaimed as universally appropriate for all humanity” ... we try not to want something which stands beyond history and institutions” ... “moral judgments make sense in relation to the customs of specific communities” ... “the core meaning of immoral action is the sort of thing we don’t do.”¹⁶⁰

Rortyan justification is a relationship among beliefs, none of which is epistemologically prior - having no final bedrock conclusion in justification as compared to the correspondence theory which seeks final justification by means of objective scientific methods. Justification is simply a strand that meanders in and out of the web of beliefs, and coherence is pictured as a web of beliefs. Thus there is no unified relationship between various beliefs, each belief is left to systematically support the other and one cannot go beyond one’s personal society’s procedures of justification since everything such as truth or rationality is embedded in the unique societal fabric in which an individual lives.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Following Dewey, Rorty distances himself from the correspondence theory of truth, and borrows from Wittgenstein that linguistic statements are true insofar that they cohere with the entire system of beliefs or “vocabulary” we hold. The aim of inquiry, in turn, is to make our beliefs and desires coherent. Rorty, *ORT*, 24, 106.

¹⁶⁰ Michael Billig, *Nationalism and Richard Rorty: The Text as a Flag for Pax Americana*, [Journal] *New Left Review*, (1993): 73.

¹⁶¹ Rorty, *ORT*, 39.

The theory of coherent behaviorism comfortably suits Rortyan pragmatism; especially his anti-foundational views enabling him to pick and choose whatever conscious system he wishes to defend against claims of “subjective relativism as an objective solution” to humanity’s ills, a way to guide the “fly out of the bottle” of dead philosophizing, and to insulate “culture from being frozen over.”¹⁶²

Rortyan coherence theory is parasitic upon Hans-Georg Gadamer’s hermeneutic as a form of hermeneutic phenomena about people rather than a methodology of the human sciences.¹⁶³ His hermeneutic is a necessary antidote to traditional epistemological behaviorism for the advancement of progressive justification as a voluntary consensus focusing on the bonds of family, society, and state as well as upon history and prejudice.

The new hermeneutic establishes routine conversational inquiry as a necessary ingredient for the development of justified ethical constructs; an agenda to collectively unite individuals of similar life journeys having evolved together – a “throwness,”¹⁶⁴ a communal solidarity rather than a common goal, a hope of understanding, learning and edifying one another. It means picking up each other’s language and using it to reconsider or even revise our understanding of the world and ourselves through rediscovery, rather than through epistemic foundational philosophy that is impersonal and impractical. Coherence, for Rorty, is also a practical “working” model of testing belief systems to find what works rather than the correspondence theory that is a

¹⁶² Geisler, *Introduction*, 377.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 358.

¹⁶⁴ Effective historical consciousness defines an awareness of historical influence, destabilizing objective knowledge by assuming a set of pre-conditioned historical standards or morals, vocabulary, prejudices, i.e. throwness. Guignon, *Richard Rorty*, 51.

spectator event that does not allow for individual freedoms already inherent within community. According to Rorty,

Rorty says: We cannot, no matter how hard we try, continue to hold a belief which we have tried, and conspicuously failed, to weave together with our other beliefs into a justificatory web ... For a believer who is (unlike a child or a psychotic) a fully fledged member of her community will always be able to produce justification for most of her beliefs – justification which meets the demands of that community.¹⁶⁵

Furthermore Rorty writes that pragmatism insists upon corporate cooperation to design moral codes that will enhance the general welfare of the community:

Our intellectual responsibilities are responsibilities to cooperate with others on common projects designed to promote the general welfare (projects such as constructing a unified science, or a uniform commercial code), and not to interfere with their private projects (i.e. translated - keep your personal life apart from your corporate life).¹⁶⁶

Hermeneutics also constitutes a pre-conditioned or causal relationship of historical consciousness which Rorty calls effective, instructional, and, in Rorty's view, epistemic.¹⁶⁷ It is instructive since we are historic beings effected by history. This hermeneutic is consciously effective offering sub-matter-a particular point of view or historical sense particular to prejudices forming our knowledge, including epistemological theory that purports to ground all knowledge when in fact epistemology serves to limit humanity to the norms of behavior, speech, education, discovery, values, inquiry, erasing boundaries between objective knowledge, and subjective opinion seeking to:

¹⁶⁵ Rorty, *PSH*, 37.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹⁶⁷ Rorty, *ORT*, 46.

Get rid of the classic picture of man-as-essentially-knower-of-essences,” ... to get rid of the “distinction between fact and value,” and “to let us think of ‘discovering facts’ as one project of edification among others.”¹⁶⁸

The Rortyan hermeneutic style establishes that humanity is not created but made. In this sense behavior is a causal experiential entity. We are what we eat, just as we are what culture, history, and life circumstance has dealt us. Our minds are paramechanical having special relation between certain objects and the human mind enabling knowledge to be processed more quickly, naturally,¹⁶⁹ and subjectively. Like empiricism, pragmatism accepts responsibility as an adequate requirement for knowledge and abandons objective tests for behavioral belief and practice since life, beliefs, and values are in constant flux.¹⁷⁰

Rorty insists as Gadamer that hermeneutics instructs us to be suspicious of all epistemology; to revise our understanding of what life brings to us. Thus effective history is the sort of consciousness of the past which changes us, and enables new possibilities of thinking about the world, our situation, and ourselves.¹⁷¹

The Coherence theory of truth differs from the Coherence theory of justified behaviorism in the follow ways. The Coherence theory of truth is one of two traditional theories of truth held by rationalist metaphysicians. Coherence theorists argue that a statement or judgment is true if and only if it coheres or is consistent with other statements of a system by implication. The theorist observes the statement to test weather it is true and fits within the statements of a given system. For the rational

¹⁶⁸ Rorty, *PSH*, 358-359.

¹⁶⁹ Guignon, *Richard Rorty*, 96.

¹⁷⁰ Geisler, *Introduction*, 116-117.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 365-377.

metaphysician “the system is a comprehensive account of the universe or reality,” but the logical positivist will “view the system of statements as the scientific picture of the world as described by the contemporary sciences.”¹⁷²

Criticism

We must assert that historical programming, consistency, or experience alone is insufficient to establish justification or knowledge; sensations without concepts are blind often leading to irresponsibility. If our world assumes humanity is a product of environmental circumstances, one must arrive at the conclusion that students are culturally and behaviorally irresponsible and perfectly justified in the Rortyan world to turn a school into a killing ground, tolerate gang violence, or supports terrorist groups. If Rorty believes that all things are socially constructed then historic programming or genetically predetermined behavior releases individuals from crimes against society, offers choices on the basis of instinct over rationale, and substitutes immorality for absolutes. Truth is then twisted to whatever an individual taste may be at the moment, for example one may know that murder cannot be justified, but at the moment it seemed sensible.

What Rorty is chewing on is an assumption that community can further assist in programming individuals toward proper patterns of behavior. But without a code of conduct this seems quite impossible. Terrorists hold to a code of conduct which they must adhere to. This writer assumes that Rorty would say that terrorists who seek to kill Americans are naturally inclined to do so, given their historic religious orientation.

¹⁷² Geisler, *Introduction*, 236-237.

Yet Rorty may decline to agree with such candor. Stating that it would be better to talk out our issues rather than bow the knee to violence, we must then return to the standard of ethics and the freedom of expression which is being neglected.

A key term in the postmodernist world is community coincides with Rortyan solidarity. The term “community” is a term that some may wish to substitute for “tribe,” but “community” has that homey kind of flavor where there is a place for everyone. Unlike the modernists who challenged individualism, here it is the group where diversity another key word, is fostered. This most important dogma fits the Rortyan utopian scheme where pragmatic relativism becomes a suitable testing place of progressive formulations of group identity, some more popular than others: feminist, libertarian, new religious movements, African American, White, Hispanic, and so on. Individuals increasingly define themselves in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference. Others identify themselves with a cause: conservative or liberal agenda, environmentalism, physical fitness, animal rights, natural foods. Veith refers to this trend as an ominous parallel to fascism. Individuals find their identity by submerging themselves in a group.¹⁷³

For Rorty, behavior is hereditary in nature and is linguistically and socially programmed by one’s historic condition. If this premise is justified objectivity, it has no bearing on behavior given its preprogrammed ideology. What is missing is the subjective means for justifying or verifying what reasonable behavior is and how it is to be objectively measured. In short Rorty is saying objectivity is the intelligent means

¹⁷³ Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 85-86.

of arriving at a subjective conclusion rather than dismissing subjective feelings as an unreliable standard for behavior.

Rorty's standard for measuring behavior without a true absolute standard, i.e. (correspondence theory) is developed in his understanding of coherence.

Coherence theory and behavioral justification

The Rortyan world of justified behaviorism is piloted by objective skepticism. Rortyan skepticism claims that behavioral reality cannot be found in metaphysics or its representational ally correspondence theory. Justification is subjectively and communally verified and in fact is objective.¹⁷⁴ This may sound oxymoronically fuzzy, but in the Rortyan world of reality life can boarder on the Wizard of Oz. Rorty validates individual behavior on the basis of causation alone to validate the reality of an experience and free the conscience from guilt. He would agree with John Locke's view that the human mind is a blank slate in which one's personal reality is developed. Rorty expresses his wholehearted acceptance of "brute, inhuman, causal stubbornness of physical objects," and even claims that "objects very often cause us to hold beliefs on the basis of preprogrammed socially conceived dimensions of assessment."¹⁷⁵

Rortyan skepticism of traditional correspondent methods to justify moral beliefs¹⁷⁶ leads him to create a new social class of beings – enter the Ironist; a re-

¹⁷⁴ "Have we discovered the surprising fact that what was thought to be objective is actually subjective, or have we invented it?" ... (who cares my words) "We must repudiate the vocabulary our opponents use, and not let them impose it upon us" and stop using the terms all together That is if we don't talk about it, it will go away or just take care of itself, or what might be termed the neglect theory." Rorty, PSH, xviii, xix.

¹⁷⁵ Rorty, *CIS*, 177.

¹⁷⁶ It is a commonly held view that critics hold arguing that Rorty's rejection of the project of modern philosophy is in effect a rejection of knowledge. What he presents as a

described/re-contextualized skeptic¹⁷⁷ grasping at the proposition of a progressive, justified behaviorism.¹⁷⁸

The Rortyan-Ironist construct consists of a broad coherent¹⁷⁹ picture of justification as social practice¹⁸⁰ and inquiry,¹⁸¹ saddled by skepticism,¹⁸² characterized as meta-stable, tolerantly receptive of differing opinions, at times confusingly insecure, and impressed by other vocabularies, although the particular individual questions privatized idioms relating to identity.

At times the character of the Rortyan ironist takes upon itself jester-like qualities rather than an individual capable of advancing the Rortyan criteria to the next level. According to Rorty,

Postmodern ironists are never quite able to take themselves seriously" because they are "always aware that the terms in which they describe themselves are

critique of epistemology is actually a self-destructive skepticism based upon empiricism – belief regarding sense-derived knowledge or subjectivism.

¹⁷⁷ The Ironist is “skepticism under another name,” and an awareness of diversity makes them “historicists and nominalists.” Guignon, *Richard Rorty*, 73-74.

¹⁷⁸ Rorty dismisses correspondence views that are troublesome or weighty. He relies on pragmatic simplicity to sell his pragmatists wares. “Pragmatists moral struggle is continuous with the struggle for existence, and no sharp break divides the unjust from the imprudent, the evil from the inexpedient.” Rorty, *PSH*, xxix.

¹⁷⁹ It is important to note that there are two types of coherence theory; a coherence theory of justification and a coherence theory of truth. They are not the same. We will discuss here the coherence theory of justification. Coherence justification in epistemology is the theory that there are no immediately justified beliefs; justification is a relationship among beliefs, none of which are epistemologically prior.

¹⁸⁰ “There is no activity called knowing which has a nature to be discovered at which natural scientists are skilled. There is simply the process of justifying beliefs to audiences.” Rorty, *PSH*, 36.

¹⁸¹ “The purpose of inquiry is to achieve agreement among human beings about what to do, to bring about consensus on the ends to be achieved and the means to achieve those ends. Inquiry that does not achieve coordination of behavior is not inquiry but simply word play.” *Ibid.*, xxiv – xxvi.

¹⁸² Guignon, *Richard Rorty*, 71-79.

subject to change, always aware of the contingency and fragility of their final vocabularies, and thus themselves.¹⁸³

The Justification of beliefs are conditioned by an awareness of causal interaction with the world-being affected by pain or responding to stimuli in one's environment such as - the stove is hot do not touch or attitudes of prejudice developed by reason of social norms. Rorty follows George Orwell concept that behavior is a series of beliefs built upon other beliefs. According to Rorty,

There is no such thing as inner freedom, no such thing as an "autonomous individual," to be the one made by historicist, including Marx, critics of "liberal individualism." This is that there is nothing deep inside each of us, no common human nature, and no built-in human solidarity, to use as a moral reference point. There is nothing to people except what has been socialized into them – their ability to use language, and thereby to exchange beliefs and desires with other people.¹⁸⁴

The following circular equation may be useful to the reader in grasping an understanding of Rortyan first principles of philosophy within developmental behaviorism:¹⁸⁵ skepticism = inquiry; inquiry = experience; experience = belief; belief = group consensus, group consensus = justification, contingent upon the consistent good a behavior conveys to community as a final vocabulary. If communal consensus is not established the equation begins again at enquiry.¹⁸⁶

Criticism

¹⁸³ Rorty, *CIS*, 73.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 168.

¹⁸⁵ Note: This is a preliminary sketch which this writer is fully aware of its fallible capacity, in need of greater insight, study, and accountability of other instructed minds.

¹⁸⁶ "We associate beliefs to things which we use, or can be imagined to use, sentences, but not to rocks or plants which have no sentimentality ascribed to them" ... Furthermore, "analogously pragmatist think the questions to ask about our beliefs is not whether they are about reality or merely about appearance, but simply whether they are the best habits of action for gratifying our desires." Rorty, *ORT*, xxiv.

Rorty refers to subjective and objective means with varying distinctions such as how things appear to us as opposed to how things really are. The question must be raised as to “whether or not what we perceive retains its existence and character independent of us as perceivers.”¹⁸⁷ If knowledge is nothing more than group consensus then it expresses only how things seem to us, which may well not be how they really are.¹⁸⁸ Rorty may be improperly reducing objectivity to inner subjectivity ignoring the fact that an individual can be in the right in opposition to his entire society. It is what some call mob psychology as the only standard for knowledge.¹⁸⁹

Closing Remarks

Causal interaction with the world may cause certain beliefs but will not provide what beliefs or values to hold or provide rationale for determining behavior. The danger is establishing a world or tribal consensus for behavior ordained by environmental fatalism and inner subjectivism rather than an objective of intelligent decision making. Rorty may be confused on concepts regarding the meaning of consensus.

The Rortyan solution for the ills of society is found in his multicultural utopian society, and is captured in his quite utilitarian statement “the greatest good for the greatest number of people.”¹⁹⁰ He suggests that the good is pleasurable quantitative, decisively justified by consistency. We may be reminded of Spock of Star Trek fame who suggested the same concept: “the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the

¹⁸⁷ Geisler, *Introduction*, 133.

¹⁸⁸ Guignon, *Richard Rorty*, 48.

¹⁸⁹ Teichman, *Truth and Progress*, 60.

¹⁹⁰ Rorty, *CIS*, xxvi.

few.” Is Gene Rodenberry advocating a teleological ethic based solely on results? I hope not, but if this is so, ethnic cleansing of a lower life-form, i.e. people who do not measure up to societal standards seems permissible. We may query Rorty and Spock: Do they foresee results or consequences of rightness or wrongness of an action on a short-term or a long-term basis?

It is logical to suggest that God can be the only utilitarian, since only an omniscient Being can possibly know the long-range results of human actions, nor can a mere mortal can predict the distant future with sufficient accuracy to form the basis for determining what the right rules are.

How are they to support an argument of the greatest good without having some concept of what is intrinsically right apart from the results? Are their ethics deontological – duty centered, or teleological – end justifies the means?

It seems most logical that they are teleological, nevertheless, these two views are not exclusive; a comprehensive ethic should include both.¹⁹¹ The Christian should be concerned with both believing that keeping God’s rules is our reasonable service, and that God will bring about the greatest good in the long run. In the short term the Christian ought to seek the greatest good without violating ethical norms.

The Christian community must be aware of utilitarian influences such as copycatism – that which influences churches to copy other programs for the sake of competing with have and have not groups or adopting a plan that “really works,” especially in regard to church growth principles that may drain financial resources, time, or sacrifice the Gospel for the sake of growth.

¹⁹¹ Geisler, *Introduction*, 393 - 397.

Rorty fails to offer his tribal enclave a working structure other than a relativistic mix of inner subjectivity. He supplies no information as to who makes final decisions other than philosophers turned priests as a type of psychological edifiers of the new order. This smacks of anti-metaphysical measures of humanity at the center of the tribal community constructed to heal our ills by immediate gratification of pleasure, political rights, subjective decision making, and justified behaviorism based on a constant – a good that seems plausible for the whole. His method establishes what he seeks to escape – authoritarianism, prejudice, and pain. We may argue that pleasure lasts for a short time without standards to judge what the good or right is.

The Rortyan multicultural model consists of reconstructing culture, destroying traditional values, and playing down personal identity and individualism. We must contend that one effect of multicultural awareness breeds more relativism. If cultural values are relative then none need be taken seriously. Call it Rortyan neo-pragmatism or postmodernism; multiculturalism may affirm all cultures but in doing so may destroy them all by fragmenting society into contending and mutually unintelligible cultures and subcultures.¹⁹²

We have sought to establish insight into the principle mindset characteristic of our evolving postmodern society by describing Rortyan neo-pragmatism as an underlying theme in its humanistic framework.

We have found that Rorty basis much of his theory on his personal journey of life and the assumption that philosophy has become stagnated in the halls of learning and should be brought to the streets where individuals may practice their personal style of

¹⁹² Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 144.

value based upon imaginative behavioral experimentation. For Rorty, this translates into hope which is the natural expression of human communalism which eliminates the potential for capitalistic power structures hindering social reform.

We have touched upon the Rortyan character and pragmatic quest. A mission which Rorty demands of himself, his students, and his readers; a personal pondering of the soul and individual conscience in order to be free of traditional ways of reasoning, by eliminating certain language games or ladders of reasoning which no longer prove useful for societal evolution, especially terms which hold metaphysical and objective standards that may hinder personal imagination and behavior experimentation.

The Rortyan neo-pragmatic mission defines a way of thinking about results or problems rather than formulating theories and principles. It is a philosophical view that a theory or concept should be evaluated in terms of how it works and its consequences as the standard for action and thought. Rortyan pragmatism demands such evaluation must be considered for all claims about truth, knowledge, morality, and politics must be tested in such a way to establish the purity of pragmatic thought.

With this in mind Rorty defines American Pragmatists as “thinkers who never really broke out of positivism (a philosophic system recognizing only that which can be scientifically verified or which is capable of logical or mathematical proof, and therefore rejecting metaphysics and theism and thus never broke with philosophy). Rorty challenges the American Pragmatist to separate from the science of Pragmatism and to enter the purer reformed system. As a reformer Rorty adds the purpose of Neo-Pragmatism is an “attempt to alter our self-image so as to make it consistent with Darwin’s claim that we differ from other animals in the complexity of our behavior,”

and to “distinguish ourselves for the brutes or the nonhuman authority which make the priests think themselves more truly human than the warriors.”¹⁹³

Rortyan reformed pragmatism is unique in the usage of philosophic hermeneutics as a means to bridge the gap between the academy and social and cultural settings which include a wide variety of aspects from socio-political scenarios, imaginative ideas, and customs to improve societal freedoms. More interesting is Rorty’s quest to establish a utopia where his concepts may be tested and proved for the betterment for the hope of humanity.

VISION OF END DAY PROPHETS

Rorty provides essential philosophic stability, and though imaginative, he skillfully offers a glimpse of what the future promise will hold under his sociologic guidelines packaged in hope, giving legs to the evolution of pragmatic postmodernism. He is also revered as one of the most influential philosophers, articulate writers and lecturers of his day, and his expertise as a social critic and political diagnostician is sought after.¹⁹⁴ Rorty can be described as a societal change agent whose voice is a megaphone for cultural analysis.

¹⁹³ Rorty, *PSH*, 68-72, (See Also) Pragmatists treat inquiry in both physics and ethics as the search for adjustment, and in particular for that set of adjustment to our fellow humans which we call the search for acceptable justification to our fellow humans which we call the search for acceptable justification and eventual agreement. Rorty, *CIS*, 72.

¹⁹⁴ Note: We must realize Rorty’s views follow his political i.e. leftist leanings, although he seeks to be objective we do not have room to flesh out political strategies of either conservative or liberal leanings for this reason we seek to offer his uncensored professional opinion.

Winds of Change

The Rortyan vision is one which recognizes dramatic change coming upon the cultural horizon of America. Rorty can almost smell it in the air. Those evolutionary forces that guide humanity will without a doubt enhance the post-enlightenment, postmodern world view. For Rorty, this wind of change will forever change the socioeconomic, political structure of our society.¹⁹⁵

Exchanging the Past for the Future

Richard Rorty has long waited the fall of the modernist iron fist of absolutism a perfectionist's agenda that could never be lived up to. Rorty is optimistic of the coming age where humanity may grasp the moment exchanging a flawed system (What America thought was the best at that time) for a better one.

America according to Rorty since the late twentieth century has lost its sense of solidarity,¹⁹⁶ pride, and purpose making it impossible to achieve self-respect and moral courage to effectively debate concerning national policy or to pursue self-

¹⁹⁵ Richard Rorty fears the brink of disaster is near "A culture without philosophy would lead to "irrationalism" i.e. Christianity – "a precious human capacity would lie unused or a central human virtue no longer exemplified." He believes America is "standing at an impasse," and as an object of ultimate concern "who gains the final victory," i.e. liberals or conservatives. He is also saddened by the fact that there are two cultures which cannot be brought together (he speaks of the Christian and the non-religious cultures) and is saddened by the fact two cultures cannot find solidarity with one another. Rorty, *COP*, xxii, 13, 114.

¹⁹⁶ The concept of solidarity is seen first and foremost as people thinking of themselves as members of a trade union or citizens of a country, or members of an army, people engaged in common effort, so that if the effort fails, identity is in trouble. If the revolution doesn't survive, if the war isn't won, then the individual is crushed. Solidarity is just what exists in such movements. It is accepting reciprocal responsibility to other members of the group for the sake of a common purpose. In this sense the Communist Party of the United States had solidarity, the Nazis had solidarity, Mao's cultural revolutionaries had solidarity. The bad guys can have solidarity too. Solidarity is morally neutral, so to speak. It's like self-respect. It's for groups what self-respect is for individuals. America once had a sense of solidarity. At the time of the victory over Hitler, for example there was a sense of America as a coherent nation with a purpose in the world and a meaning. That's what we don't have anymore. Rorty, *TCF*, 61 – 63.

improvement. Rorty implores artists and intellectuals to create images of and to tell stories about the national past that communicate different stories about America's self-identity. He seeks to strike a balance between stories implying self achieving greatness often resulting in painful humility of others and stories of suffering that provide impetus for mockery or disgust.

Rorty refers to authors, unlike Dewey and Whitman, who recommended that individuals remain change agents rather than being "horrified spectators" of history past. Some authors have sought to shape the American mood, asserting the United States government has become an entrepreneurial giant, having won over the hopes of a "free egalitarian society" or speak of the shame of American endorsements: importation of slaves, slaughter of Native Americans, rape of ancient forests, and the Vietnam War calling them "atrocities." These writers also believe that college students have less faith in the American future than when they first entered. Rorty chides them for such reckoning writing that the American student has become detached from the concept of citizenship as an opportunity for action, when he calls "the spirit of detached spectatorship" having entered the soul long before students enter into the educational process.

One of Rorty's key concerns for the reformation of America, specifically "the American left." For Rorty it has become an institution having lost its vision and common consensus for a progressively developing democracy. He believes one reason for disunity in the left was the Vietnam War a watershed that consequentially effected generations of Americans to believe the American dream was unachievable, with an ingrained suspicion "that war not only could never be forgiven, but had shown us to be

a nation conceived in sin and irredeemable.” Thus America remains in a type of political stagnation without purpose, pride or direction. Rorty offers no solutions to this issue except that America needs to return to the national pride she once held before Vietnam. But this is hardly likely given the historical circumstances which the United States faced in the past.

A Necessary Development

At times Rorty touches upon the necessity of a kind of insurrection or revolution in order to accelerate America’s progress toward a new political reformation, providing a state of freedom from inhibitors-physical, conscience or otherwise-hindering humanity from achieving its maximum imaginary potential for a self-justified lifestyle.

Rorty senses economic concerns will further bridge the gap between the modern and postmodern systems especially in old industrial nations. Specifically, America is experiencing immigrant labor issues, companies seeking to export jobs to other economic issues. Rorty calls for the need of a “bourgeoisified” working class, meaning a working class does not live too differently from the middle class. Unless there is a radical change in the economic situation of America the trend will continue to dissolve the middle class and give way to a two class system - one of a plebian working class and the other an aristocratic upper class. This will further the need of a hero to rally lower classes toward a possible regime.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

The economic scenario above concerns Rorty because it develops insecurity, hinders democratic consensus, spawns skepticism, and raises a Christian fundamentalism that hinders solidarity and national pride.¹⁹⁸

Rorty senses storm clouds on the Western horizon which will eventually separate the working class from the upper class specialist.

Class division came into existence between those who made 'professional' salaries and those whose hourly wage kept sinking towards the minimum. But the politicians pretended to be unaware of this steady breakdown of fraternity.¹⁹⁹

The globalization of the labor market is driving down U.S. wages and it's producing not exactly unemployment, but employment at a starvation wage ... and there is no future in the minimum wage ... sooner or later there will be a populist upheaval, probably from the fascist right.²⁰⁰

Rorty does not wish to encourage the thought of a coming destruction of America. He strives to take a neutral approach in the culture wars between the progressive leftists (liberals) and the conservative right (orthodox) by remaining unconcerned if the nation follows fascism, Marxism, totalitarianism, or follows the moral heritage of the Enlightenment.²⁰¹ On the other hand he argues that he would rather follow the "progressivists as defining the only America I care about." He is willing "to grant that welfare state capitalism is the best we can hope for."²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Rorty, *PSH*, 247.

²⁰⁰ Rorty, *TCF* 62.

²⁰¹ Rorty is: "willing to grant (that America) at any time could slide into fascism at any time, but proud of its past and guardedly hopeful about its future." He is "willing to grant that welfare state capitalism is the best we can hope for, and see ourselves still faithful to everything that was good in the socialist movement, at the same time." Rorty, *PSH*, 17.

²⁰² Rorty, *PSH*, 17.

The Future of the West - A Rortyan Perspective

Rorty is willing to settle for second best, and resolve himself to a kind of welfare state as a necessary next step for America, given its economic and culturally diverse nature. But he cannot rule out the possibility that laborers will seek “a strongman” who will come to their assistance to fight hierarchical powers.

Many writers on socio-economic policy have warned that the old industrialized democracies are heading into a Weimar-like period, in which populist movements are likely to overturn constitutional governments. ... Others suggest that fascism is in the American future. Members of labor unions of unskilled workers will realize that their government is not even trying to prevent wages from sinking or to prevent jobs from being exported. ... At that point, something will crack. The non-suburban electorate will decide the system has failed and start looking around for a strongman - someone willing to assure them that, once he is elected, the smug bureaucrats, tricky lawyers, overpaid bond salesmen, and postmodernist professors will no longer call the shots.²⁰³

The Rortyan strong man will bring a renewal of sadism making peace with the “international super-rich,” just as Hitler made his with German industrialists. He will invoke the glorious memory of the Gulf war to provoke military adventures that will generate short term prosperity. Yet the strong man will prove to be a “disaster” for the country and the world.

People will wonder why there was so little resistance to his rise. Where, they will ask, was the American left? Why was it only rightists such as Pat Buchanan who spoke to the workers about the consequences of globalization?²⁰⁴

Rorty relies on the American people to make the decision of what is best for America, but his principle understanding follows postmodern totalitarianism, individuals are free when directed by their society, that is, reality is socially contrasted

²⁰³ Richard Rorty, *The American Road to Fascism*, New Statesman, Volume 127. Issue: 4384, [magazine online]; available from Questa Media America, Inc. www.questia.com.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

and those who lead it have unlimited power. The Rortyan societal construct is one of human interest, and eventually in his view the United States to yield sovereignty to what Tennyson called “The Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World:”

The “feeling that such a government will not come into existence unless individual government states cooperate and citizens take pride even rueful and hesitant pride in their governments effort of progress.”²⁰⁵

Rorty’s bottom line is that “human will” establishes progress, “truth” is determined by the world, “action” is the solution to dissolving stagnation of the sociopolitical kind, and whatever the outcome of human deliberation, excluding the transcendent is at the forefront of the Rortyan agenda. Rorty’s vision is not an isolated case. There are alternative voices speaking of coming changes to America.

Alternative Visionary Constructs

Rorty is not the only voice adding to the cultural malaise of dreamers seemingly mystified by history past. British historian Arnold Toynbee known for his revolutionary study that history mirrors civilizations or societies evolutionary maturity rather than nations, and whose theory focuses upon the supposition that the disintegration of civilization is the inability to respond to moral and religious changes rather than to physical or environmental ones.²⁰⁶ Toynbee finds that when a civilization

²⁰⁵ Rorty, *AOC* 3.

²⁰⁶ Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975), was a British historian, known for his view of the past as a succession of civilizations rather than political entities.

Of the many books written by Toynbee, the 12-volume series *A Study of History* (1934-61) has had considerable influence on modern attitudes toward history, religion, and international affairs. This monumental work is based on Toynbee's thesis that history reflects the progress of civilizations or societies rather than of nations. It is a comparative study of 26 civilizations in world history, analyzing their genesis, growth, and disintegration. According to Toynbee's hypothesis, the failure of a civilization to survive was the result of its inability to respond to moral and religious challenges, rather than to physical or environmental challenges.

begins to decay it succumbs to a kind of cultural suicide from within failing to recognize transcendent and metaphysical reality. In this way, Toynbee disagrees with Rorty's pragmatic philosophy that seeks to disinherit itself from abstract causes, something that Toynbee claims is the very soul of societal existence. Nor would he embrace nationalism of which Rorty seeks to recover.

Weather or not we agree with his work,²⁰⁷ Toynbee seems prophetic in his rendering of the postmodern era, and characteristics following Western civilizations nearing the precipice of disintegration by negating transcendent values resulting in three alternatives filling the spiritual vacancy: nationalism, ecumenicalism, and technicalism.

After describing three alternatives following the repudiation of transcendent norms Toynbee shares several characteristics, perhaps intertwined, following a society in trouble.

Among the other books written by Toynbee are *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey* (1922), *The World and the West* (1953), *Acquaintances* (1967), and *Experiences* (1969). Although admired for his vast scholarship and deeply philosophical approach, Toynbee was also criticized for his tendency to generalize and to stress regeneration through religion. Microsoft ® Encarta ® 2006. © 1993-2005 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

²⁰⁷ Note: Weather or not we agree with Toynbee's work, that is, by looking to history past we can develop history's future or the premise that the key to civilizations salvation is have some sort of religious consensus. Thus it is necessary to return to religion, not necessarily Christianity, by a simple act of the will, that is, to return to one's personal deity, in mass, performing its rituals as a means to revival and national prosperity. Toynbee recognizes that whenever religious consensus is diminished something else rushes into fill the void. Yet the author historian's work is much more important than a general framework of history. Toynbee offers a glimpse into the Western present, an empire which Toynbee characterizes possibly in its final stages of decline. Thus almost prophetically Toynbee senses gathering winds attending a coming storm and concurs with Rorty that societal changes are on their way.

First is a sense of abandon.²⁰⁸ Western culture may be described as a throwaway culture. It would seem everything is expendable, and as a result the abandon principle is “a state of mind that accepts antinomianism either consciously or unconsciously, in theory and practice – as a surrogate for creativeness,” meaning individuals give up on morals and surrender to personal impulses to achieve what they feel is being creative. They also yield to truancy²⁰⁹ – a form of escapement or withdrawal from the world into a personal reality of their own, a distraction rendering personal fulfillment and entertainment.

For Toynbee there is also a sense of drift²¹⁰ – a form of mental wandering that presents itself in a fatalistic form having no control over their lives and all else is meaningless determinism. There is also a sense of guilt,²¹¹ a wrestling with the inability to escape from a conscious awareness of imperfection and promiscuity,²¹² not necessarily of the sexual kind but a mindset of eclecticism – has no source of reference whereby to draw upon foundational belief structures and finds tolerance of everything and anything an accepted norm for collaborative virtue. Toynbee describes promiscuity in the following way:

Promiscuity is an act of self-surrender to the melting pot ... in Religion and Literature and Language and Art as well as ... Manners and Customs.”²¹³

Patricia Waugh summarizes Toynbee’s thoughts further:

²⁰⁸ Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), 5: 399.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 404-411.

²¹¹ Ibid., 412-431.

²¹² Ibid., 432-439.

²¹³ Ibid., 439-440.

For Toynbee, the postmodern age would be the fourth and final phase of Western history and one dominated by anxiety, irrationalism and helplessness. In such a world, consciousness is adrift, unable to anchor itself to any universal ground of justice, truth or reason on which the ideals of modernity had been founded in the past. Consciousness itself is thus decentered: no longer agent of action in the world, but a function through which impersonal forces pass and intersect. Art becomes not so much an expression of human spirit, but another commodity. Like knowledge, therefore, it can no longer be critical but only functional. Moreover, we are in the postmodern condition and, implicated in a culture where all knowledge is produced through discourse, we can no longer seek transcendence. There is no position outside of culture from which to view culture. There is no Kantian “view from nowhere,” no conceptual space not already implicated in that which it seeks to contest. There can only be disruption from within: micro politics, language games, periodic skirmishes, irony, and fragmentation.²¹⁴

The future of the Western World, says Toynbee is most likely to be both national and socialist. His premise is based upon the continuation of Capitalism and Communism remaining side by side and becoming different names for much the same.

Toynbee is certain that disintegration is inevitable when the “creative minority” changes into a “ruling minority, the masses into a “proletariat” – a term he understands as a group which can no longer make any real contribution to society. For Toynbee this is the schism, the first sign of a civilization’s having broken down – a schism into three parts, for besides the ruling minority there emerges “an internal and an external proletariat, “which latter clashes against the frontiers of the State or the Empire of the ruling minority.”

The course of history proceeds by the *rhythm* of challenge and response; but while a growing society has always been able to find the right answer, and is therefore faced each time by a different challenge, a broken-down society can no longer really succeed; it is at best able to put off the evil day and finds itself after some time confronted again by the same problem. In the souls of men, too, the schism can be observed. Social disharmony creates a feeling of impotence, of sin; the standards of style and of behavior get out of order; ways

²¹⁴ Patricia Waugh, *Postmodernism: A Reader*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1992), 5.

out of the unbearable present are tried through "archaism"—back to the past, or through "futurism"—a leap into the future; or an attempt is made to detach oneself from society by means of philosophy or of religion.²¹⁵

Toynbee does not chart the demise of democracy as Rorty's "bleak dystopian portrait" (a imagined place or state in which everything is unpleasant or bad, typically a totalitarian or environmentally degraded one) where Western democracy is headed. Although Toynbee may agree with Rorty that at the end of the demise democracy will have been replaced by a different system, not necessarily military dictatorship nor "Orwellian totalitarianism," rather a relatively benevolent despotism (the exercise of absolute power, especially in a cruel and oppressive way, imposed by what would gradually become a hereditary nomenclature).

At the outset we cannot tell if Toynbee's or Rorty's worlds will come to pass. Other voices like Walden Bello address to "the crisis of American hegemony from his book entitled "Dilemmas of Domination" where he describes three key crises facing democracy all of which produce a powerless democratic system at the hands of wealthy elitists. Yet it is important to be weary of the vulnerability of the democratic system and events that may mark a credible end point if the forces that are eviscerating democracy are not subdued.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ Pieter Geyl, Arnold J. Toynbee, and Pitirim A. Sorokin, *The Pattern of the Past: Can We Determine It?* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1949), 5-10.

²¹⁶ Democratic nations are following the same sort of power structure that survived the end of the Soviet Union and is now re-solidifying under Putin and his fellow KGB alumni. The same structure seems to be taking shape in China and in Southeast Asia. In countries run in this way, public opinion does not greatly matter. Elections may still be held, but opposition parties are now allowed to pose any serious threat to the powers that be. Careers are less open to talent, and more dependent on connections with powerful persons. Since the courts and police review boards are relatively powerless, it is often necessary for shopkeepers to pay protection money to the police, or to criminals tolerated by the police, in order to stay in business. It is dangerous for citizens to complain about corruption about the abuse of power by

Furthermore, Toynbee offers insight into future conditions to discern characteristics warning of changing societal values forming in Western value systems.

Charting America's Shift from the Transcendent

Toynbee charts conditions or “idolatries” which seek to take the place of religious or transcendent consensus. When such consensus is lost three idolatries most often fill the void: nationalism, ecumenicalism and technicalism:

The first idolatry is nationalism or defied parochial community (s).²¹⁷ These particular cultures or subcultures idolize themselves to be divine in the sense that “community” or in postmodern terminology “tribal enclaves” necessitate the total network for life including moral values conducive to a given community. Outsiders are not welcome and may be considered enemies to whom morals and values do not apply. Toynbee outlines how Renaissance nationalism vices formed after consensus was compromised in the medieval era. This pattern applies as well to fascism of Mussolini and the national socialism of Adolf Hitler.²¹⁸

The national consensus of the West is also under fire as special interest groups vie for recognition and demonstrate for particular rights and freedoms often clouding

public officials. High culture is restricted to areas that are irrelevant to politics...No more uncensored media. No more student demonstrations. Not much in the way of civil society, in short, a return to the Ancient Regime, with the national security establishment of each country playing the role of court in Versailles. Walden Bello, “Crisis of American Hegemony,” from his book entitled “Dilemmas of Domination,” October, 2005, (Speech: Dalhousie University, St. Francis Xavier University, and York University, Canada), <http://www.Spectrezone.org/global/Bello3.-.htm>

²¹⁷ Toynbee, *An Historian's Approach to Religion*, 211.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 211-215.

transcendent values and threatening to compromise traditional ethical and moral standards.

Toynbee's model is strikingly prophetic of postmodernism and postmodernist society. When Eastern Europe lost its Marxist consensus, new nationalisms merged –“deified parochial communities” that are at each others' throats. The loss of democratic consensus in the United States has led to racial politics, militant interest groups, and subcultures that simmer with hostility towards each other.²¹⁹

A second option to the loss of a transcendent religious consensus is the “deified ecumenical empire.”²²⁰ Toynbee's ecumenical model – Rome exhibits idolized unity while accommodating great diversity. When Rome turned away from localized ancestral religion it was replaced by emperor worship, meaning the emperor became a god. The Roman Empire became divinized as the people followed Roman law burning incense and offering prayer to Caesar. Rome was held together by deifying itself while allowing pluralism under its rule, but detested Christians who refused to honor Caesar as god and chose not to be included as part of the pluralistic society.

Toynbee includes China, Egypt, Persia, and Samaria in his consideration of ecumenical empires. He notes the reemergence the ecumenical movement in the years following World War II when the United Nations and the utopian scheme for a single world government began to surface.²²¹

The global purpose of ecumenicalism calls for world “unity” and has sought to unify religious consensus, throw away doctrinal difficulties to encourage world faith and to implement politics in place of orthodoxy. One may also note that Tolerance may

²¹⁹ Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 202.

²²⁰ Toynbee, *Historian's Approach to Religion*, 43-58.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

be a manifestation of the ecumenical construct seeking to define characteristics relevant to the model ecumenical community of our day. The term also purveys characteristics of relativism, and is a player in the quest for peaceful co-existence within the global village.²²²

Toynbee also refers to the possibility of an “ecumenical welfare state” as the next idol to qualify to take the place of Christian transcendent principles in the West, as a loss of unity and liberty emerges and national consensus diminishes. A society taking upon itself all the “responsibilities and attributes of the gods,” meaning the deified community or state will provide food, jobs, health, values, and beliefs.²²³ It is hopeful since the demise of communism the model of state benevolence that such a project will not be undertaken.

A third option is the elevation of technology to the place of religion. Toynbee’s calls this the “idolization of the invincible technician.”²²⁴ Toynbee is not concerned with advance of scientific knowledge as he is with how technology is used to rise above nature and the ease of lifestyle, by machines, that is, he recognizes substituting omnipotence and omniscience with human design is to replace the Divine with human creative invention.

The technicians who invent these products will form a new priesthood with knowledge inaccessible to the laity – to whom the technology will be as incomprehensible as magic. The masses may be totally uninterested in objective science, but they will build their lives and their values around technology.²²⁵

²²² Ibid., 250-253.

²²³ Ibid., 219.

²²⁴ Ibid., 220-238.

²²⁵ Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 204-205.

Technology is a boon to humanity and contributes to the advancement of lifestyle but, left unchecked it becomes a danger to traditional mental and spiritual values infusing a type of monopoly over culture that demands continual updating and renewal. Technology can dilute the necessity or capacity for thought, and confuses traditional moral and spiritual values as out of date. Individuals begin to apply the technological mindset to everything, destroying important sociologic functions that have kept a civilization from disintegrating. It is with hope that feelings, ideas, values, ethics, or terms such sin and evil will not fall to technologies quickly advancing demands to question everything in the name of progress. This is what Rorty in philosophical terms explains as ladders that are helpful to the advancement of humanity or throw outs which are no longer needed to reach for the future.

One can only imagine the impact that animated DVD comics may provide in capturing minds that are creative enough to imagine that life is an illusionary reality in light of advancing technology to formulate life like imagery. Toynbee writes: “The technician, not the philosopher, whose theories the technician translates into practice, was the new hero whom the West adopted in the later decades of the seventeenth century” when the West was attracted to the thoughts of Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes philosophy.

Toynbee states of Hobbes:

Pronounced that the real and legitimate goal of the sciences is the endowment of human life with new inventions and riches,” and Thomas Hobbes philosophy, “is a means for attaining technological results” ...”By philosophy is understood the knowledge acquired by reasoning ... to the end to be able to

produce, as far as matter and humane force permit, such effects as human life require.”²²⁶

Thus the influence of technical advancement is not an evil of itself when it is used to the betterment of life, but when the science begins to dominate the mind it endangers objective values for deciding moral and ethical issues and will be recognized when everything from theology to ethics comes under the auspices of technology as the final voice for all things.

Rorty’s analytic assumptions and Toynbee’s prophetic stages marking the decline in the American sociologic and political fabric are important factors to recognize and one could easily find other voices to fuel a concern. Yet there is another we must take note of, one who supplies an alternative construct for the decline or renewal of the American system.

Other Perspectives

There are seemingly countless constructs of those who have attempted to perceive trends in history as a meaningful antidote to future events. Toynbee and Rorty stand with individuals such as Augustine, Voltaire, Hegel, and Marx to name a few. Toynbee characterizes visionaries as those who wish to “save society” or wish to “save man from society itself.” According to Toynbee, those who wish to save society are most often drawn to sword or power by appealing to the past or to the future, and those seeking to save society itself are those drawn to the founders of philosophy “who work only for the ruling minority, and the founders of a religion, whose empire is not of this world.”

²²⁶ Toynbee, *An Historian’s Approach to Religion*, 220.

There are some voices that sense the demise of democracy under the tyranny of the majority operating without moral restraints by accepting no moral absolutes. The political implications of a republic set upon relativism invites anarchy. Charles Colson would agree that relativism is a Pandora's Box and when opened it unleashes evil of every kind:

Nowhere is the existence of an absolute standard more vital than in politics and government. In the West, nations built sound political structures on the belief that ultimately man's laws were to be but a reflection of God's immutable, moral laws ... But if there is no truth – no objective standards of what is good or just and, therefore, no standard of what is unjust-then the social contract is always threatened by the whim of the moment. And tyranny, either from the unrestrained passions of the majority or from a ruthless dictator, inevitably follows.²²⁷

Some may expect a violent revolution or a progressive evolutionary joining of the better of two possible worlds (modern and postmodern), but the church must be a part of the realized expectation to come. The Christian church may not yet be aroused to seize the moment, but she can be, and therefore we do not have to assume a violent revolution or certain evolutionary consequences. But there is another voice we must heed and that is the Christian church.

The world may or may not benefit from individuals analysis or assumptions, but God is the soul denominator between determining the fate and destiny of the World. The Christian church must not be left out of the equation. Her voice and presence has outlasted countless empires, survived tyrannical leaders, and is a force that has changed sociologic cultures and has established many needed reforms. Thus God's handwork, i.e. spiritual renewal, and sovereign mercy, cannot be left from cultural and

²²⁷ Charles Colson, *The Body: Being Light in Darkness*, (Dallas, TX: Word, 1992), 163.

societal development. For God is the soul denominator in determining the fate and destiny of the world.

We have seen that there are many voices that foretell Western change, some seemingly prophetic as Toynbee and others like Rorty who play important analytic roles in evaluating the future of the West. Rorty believes economic difficulties will lead to political reformation, one that will support a national welfare state under a totalitarian fascist regime. He bids America to solidarity without realizing that the national welfare system is destroying the morale as well as the economic base of the United States and at times follows fate at the bidding of evolutionary winds that move the human will to achieve greater pinnacles of success.

On another note, could the talk of destruction or revolution be part of the American psychological makeup. American's are enthralled with a type of nihilism that proceeds from our upbringing to fear the end is near from apocalyptic preachers of centuries past, fear of cold war annihilation, and attack from the Islamic world. Americans have always feared their freedoms are at risk while Hollywood and video games keep the suspense alive through disaster movies and video games, and the weather channel continually shows images of possible mass destruction upon the horizon. We cannot blame Rorty and others for their sincerity, Rorty explains it well, but all Americans have been reared to love freedom and have an anxiety of it taken away. We live in a confused fragmented society with multitudes of images, Rorty finds a creative way to handle his anxiety by placing it within a form of personal narrative pasted together with bits and pieces of life waiting for a conclusion which only a Tom

Clancy thriller can do. Nevertheless be cognizant of voices arriving at the end of history or a fire that begs to be fed.

Rorty's visionary ideal for America is to engage post-enlightenment romanticism whereby pragmatism may find root for the advancement of self actualization in a poeticized arena of expression and experimentation outside the norms of objective rationale that will move the country closer to a utopian future.

Romanticism, Nihilism, and the Poeticized Culture

During the late 1700s and early 1800s, Romanticism was the principal literary style of Europe and its reaction to the Enlightenment was a unique transition. Romanticism emphasized emotion, the enlightenment reason, romanticism stressed imagination and subjectivity while the enlightenment underscored logic and objectivity. Romanticism's naturalist obsession that glorified the past was subdued by Darwin's theory of evolution claiming nature did not necessarily embody harmony and goodness once assumed by the Romantics. But in the early 1960's romanticism revived as the youth culture questioned foundational values of modernism's civilization, social regimentation, rational planning, and the evils of capitalism.²²⁸

²²⁸ Rorty was raised in the enlightenment ethos, a culture inspired to the generation gap where respect of leadership or parental influence was jilted as a legalism and replaced by a seemingly necessity for lawlessness or the more flexible concept of morality called antinomianism. This is the world which the generation of Richard Rorty helped to shape and perhaps subconsciously seeks to heal.

Romanticism in a Post-Enlightened Age

Rorty identifies romanticism as “the insistence on individual spontaneity and private perfection”²²⁹ and leads him to believe that history has evolved in such a way as to replace God, reason, and nature as the source of human hope and romanticism contributes to nihilism’s rejection of all religious and moral principles and often the belief that life is meaningless.²³⁰ Rorty nihilism contributes to the destruction of metaphysical notions and hierarchical concepts granting citizenship to the ironist’s power of imagination to freely “take liberties never taken before,” realizing that immaturity is found of those who desire for something to obey.²³¹ The Rortyan poeticized culture encompasses solidarity and the contingency of self.

The romantic age of the Rortyan persuasion is found in the school of thought advocating empirical evidence which is verifiable by observation or experience rather than theory or pure logic. It is a society that advocates greater national consensus via increased synthesis of inclusive and emerging values that maintain greater diversity of individuality under the watchful eye of society.

Rorty concludes that objectivism brought suffering and cruelty from the assumption that universal values and moral inquiry were suitable for the public

²²⁹ Rorty, *CIS*, 30.

²³⁰ Note: If historical analysis of romanticism leads Rorty to believe history has evolved to eliminate certain structures of belief he must also address the issue that romanticism leads us to another important element associated with greatness coupled with the mastery of autonomy of the strong poet using the masculine gender ideology to exclude women. Michael Brint, *William Weaver; Pragmatism in Law and Society*, (Westview Press, 1991).

²³¹ Rorty, *PSH*, 126, 265.

realm²³² and believes the enlightenment theory of universal constructs must be restructured in order for humanity to dwell in peace. Rorty argues against a common nature within humanity and states there is no single way in which an individual's desire for personal fulfillment can be found peacefully to coincide with others. For Rorty it is impossible for humanity to live in peace together since universal participation is a difficulty given individual preference and personal need.

Therefore Rorty chooses the romantic to free humanity's imagination and creative instincts maintaining the era developed many of humanity's shortfalls as the will to power producing hierarchical standards that abused ethnocentric freedoms. He identifies "romanticism" as "the insistence on individual spontaneity and private perfection"²³³ and desires to create an identity which owes little or nothing of its shape to preceding identities, it is "the desire for self-creation and for private autonomy"²³⁴

Something similar could be said for Kierkegaard and for Nietzsche - and for Richard Rorty (for all his supposedly being a pragmatist philosopher) right now, here in America. This is the realm of the romantic, where there are no objective truths or values not created by men themselves, where what you intend is more important than what is achieved, where commitment is the thing and subjective wins over objective

²³² Tremendous suffering and cruelty are said to have resulted from the categorical mistake of assuming that the values of the private realm are suitable for the public realm, and that the latter should be restructured to make room for the former. In order to avoid further mistakes, Rorty advocates "privatization" to attempt authenticity and purity, in order to prevent oneself from thinking that there is some social goal more important than avoiding cruelty. Rorty, *CIS*, 65.

²³³ Rorty, *CIS*, 30.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, xiii.

every time. Another residue, of course, is Berlin's whole theory of the history of people as one of competing goods and incommensurate value systems among peoples.²³⁵

Rorty holds that the age of enlightened thought had peaked whereby objective truth could no longer sustain humanity's quest to find absolutes and believes without progress culture and humanity would be deterred from the self-creative process and in a metaphorical sense become frozen over without hope. Thankfully, there were those, Rorty being one, who followed Rudolph Carnap's campaign for radical conceptual cleansing and his iconoclastic intolerance of traditionalism that bought into Hegel's literary culture romanticism which substitutes the quest for truth with a search for the appropriate vocabulary. Rorty called those who sought to look outside the box revolutionaries who dreamt of discarding unrealistic themes such as the metaphysics of past generations to be replaced by tough-minded research into the linguistic framework by which the world is conceptualized. Thanks to Carnap, philosophy was going to be reborn as the systematic study of language.²³⁶

Consider the following example of a type of literary mode of self determination that Rorty attributes to Marcel Proust who sought to free himself of how language determined him to be.

²³⁵ Colin Walters, *Tracking Romanticism, Root and Branch*, Washington Times, 14 March 1999, [Article on line]; available from Questa Media America, Inc., www.questia.com.

²³⁶ Rorty recalls dreams of playing a part in Carnap's philosophical revolution - purging language of the last trances of such capital-letter concepts as God, Mind and the Good, so that future generations could stand tall and fearlessly confronting the world as it really is. But during the Seventies he became convinced that if God, Mind and the Good are figments of metaphysical dream-work, the same must apply to the World as It Really Is. His first book, published in 1967, [Linguistic Turn pp. 74-79] was an anthology of Essays in Philosophical Method designed to document the reorientations in analytic philosophy that followed Rudolf Carnap's move from Germany to the US in 1935. Rorty, TLT.

Marcel Proust, he notes, wanted to "free himself from the descriptions of himself offered by the people he had met. He wanted not to be merely the person these other people thought they knew him to be, not to be frozen in the frame of a photograph shot from another person's perspective. He dreaded being, in Sartre's phrase, turned into a thing by the eye of another.... His method of freeing himself from those people--of becoming autonomous--was to redescribe people who had described him. He drew sketches of them from lots of different perspectives--and thus made clear that none of these people occupied a privileged standpoint. Proust became autonomous by explaining to himself why the others were not authorities, but simply fellow contingencies. He re-describes them as being as much a product of others' attitudes toward them as Proust himself was a product of their attitudes toward him." ²³⁷

Rorty argues that in order to have a liberal society in which humanity may pursue liberty metaphysical language must be redescribed or eliminated to free individuals from language games such as guilt, sin, and judgment.

Rorty's pursues self-creationism whereby pragmatic citizens are no longer described or categorized to fit a given agenda. For Rorty language follows that it is incorrect to believe that finite, mortal, contingently existing human beings might derive the meanings of their lives from anything except other finite, mortal, contingent human beings.²³⁸ Thus language for Rorty and postmodernists is a factor in developing communal solidarity and the transmortification of enlightenment language into a pragmatic vocabulary expressing de-theologized, de-scientized, and de-

²³⁷ Rorty, *CIS*, 102.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

philosophized secularity toward a lifestyle of experience and practice that most gratify the needs of a particular group.²³⁹ The following equation may be suitable to describe the Rortyan postmodernist viewpoint of language as an army of metaphorical tools which can dissipate historical networks into agnostic language games where the criterion for success is performance not truth and to distort dualities of truth and fiction as nonsensical.

Language is analogous a set of tools rather than a jigsaw puzzle and the contrast between the tool model and the puzzle model compares with the distinction between "creation" and "representation." The tool metaphor stresses the transitive character of linguistic behavior, denying that language could be somehow sufficient apart from its transformative uses. Thus language is rendered contingent in the follow way: Truth is a property of sentences; sentences depend upon vocabularies; vocabularies are drawn from languages; languages are human creations. Therefore, truth is a human creation.²⁴⁰

Rorty believes the purpose for linguistic reconstruction is to formulate language to get what we want out of life. This means the transmortification of enlightenment verbiage into a pragmatic vocabulary which best expresses a de-theologized, de-scientized, and de-philosophized secularity departing from the scientized culture of the enlightenment and into a pragmatic and poetized culture hoping to replace passion for idiosyncratic fantasy with reason.²⁴¹ It is the Rortyan hope that some reasoning may remain intact for open minded discussion, experience, and example.

²³⁹ That is assuming language is the arena of all power, deconstructionists seek liberation from this power by disrupting the authority of language. Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 54.

²⁴⁰ Hall, *Prophet of Pragmatism*, 86.

²⁴¹ To replace passion for fantasy with reason may sound oxymoronic since Rorty holds that in order to establish democratic consensus we must raze Enlightenment doctrine to the ground but we must be cognizant that Rorty being a product of the modernization of the mind and his educational background which he cannot escape. Therefore Rorty must hold to some strand of modernity to rationally provide evidence for his cause. Although it is possible that we are mistaken if we realize Rorty has little to nothing original to share since he relies upon

Rorty's linguistic contingency demands "the world does not speak only we do," and reminds us that language is bound up with our culture, beyond our control, and we cannot truly think for ourselves,²⁴² that "nature is mute without the narrative," narrative meaning what is being understood as a spoken or written account of connected events or in a lyrical fashion that expresses emotional, imaginative aesthetics.²⁴³

Rorty a naturalist and follower of Charles Darwin, claims the progressive nature of the world as things that "shove us around" exerting "resistance" and "pressures" on humanity by their "blind impress."²⁴⁴ Rorty argues that in the history of civilization, poetic, artistic, philosophical, political or scientific innovation and progress result from "the accidental coincidence of a private obsession with a public need." We must be careful to never say that it is all just contingency; it is in fact "all chance worthy of determining our fate."²⁴⁵

historic philosophical heroes of the past to supply his systematic cut paste and paste, philosophizing. Rorty, *CIS*, 53.

²⁴² To a large degree, our language thinks for us. There is no "transcendental logos," no objective meaning, no realm of absolute truth that exists beyond the bounds of our human language. To use another postmodernist slogan, we are incarcerated in a "prison house of language." Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 53.

²⁴³ He suggests that we must make a distinction between the claim that the world is out there and the claim that truth is out there. Of course the world is out there, but to claim that "truth" is out there, according to Rorty, is like arguing there is a vocabulary out there waiting for us to discover it. He explains: Truth cannot be out there ... cannot exist independently of the human ... mind--because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there. The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not ... Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own--unaided by the describing activities of human beings--cannot. Rorty, *CIS*, 5.

²⁴⁴ Rorty, *ORT*, 83.

²⁴⁵ Rorty claims human behavior marked by blind impress has no sense of ethic – it is neither tragic nor terrible. He agrees with Freud that it is neither necessary nor desirable to harmonize, synthesize or integrate a private ethic of self-creation and a public ethic of mutual accountability. Rorty, *CIS*, 31. Rorty argues to believe vocabulary is out there to be discovered is as foolish as thinking that the truth is out there to be discovered. Rorty states "Truth cannot be out there ... cannot exist independently of the human mind ... because sentences cannot exist, or be out there ... The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not ... Only

One may assume as Rorty negates the metaphysical and embraces the natural or material realms giving language its due, that is, beyond our control or ability to think rationally is left to the dilemma of fate and chance to direct humanity toward a hopeful end.

We have found that Romanticism sanctions the freedom to bypass truth for privatized yearnings, public hopes, and practices by voiding necessary objective foundations, valuing contingent vocabularies that represent our beliefs and desires in a type of authenticity, perfection, and purity within the yearnings of self-creationism. For Rorty pragmatic romanticism is a practical simplistic expression sanctioning experience over theoretical means of discovering finality or absolutes of the way things are. Rortyan pragmatic romanticism senses the need for a poeticized culture, a changing cultural landscape and a strong poet – a hero endowed with imagination, sympathy, and memory to move the country closer to its progressive utopian future.

Rorty is enamored with Harold Bloom's²⁴⁶ poetized culture emphasizing the strong poet whose realm deemphasizes traditional terminology of warrior, priest, truth-seeking, logical, objective scientist which is to be replaced by formidable terminology

descriptions of the world can be true of false ... The world is on its own unaided by the describing activities of human beings. Rorty, *CIS*, 5.

²⁴⁶ Harold Bloom: In the 1970s literary theory flourished at Yale University, where Harold Bloom was concerned with the anxiety and the creative stimulus stemming from literary influence and with the desirability of academic consensus on which literary works were truly important. He expressed these views in *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1973) and *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (1994). Based on the academic movement known as deconstruction, originated by literary critic Jacques Derrida, other Yale scholars challenged the idea that a text has a single, unchanging meaning. They argued that interpretation “deconstructs” multiple layers of meaning in a text. In the 1980s and 1990s many literary theorists turned their attention toward culture and history, analyzing the ways in which literature shapes and is shaped by the world in which it is written. Microsoft ® Encarta ® 2006. © 1993-2005 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

such as irrationality and relativism. Rorty describes his new culture in the following way:

A poeticized culture would be one which would not insist we find the real wall behind the painted ones, the real touchstones of truth as opposed to touchstones which are merely cultural artifacts. It would be a culture which, precisely by appreciating that all touchstones are such artifacts, would take as its goal the creation of ever more various and multicolored artifacts.²⁴⁷

Rorty boldly states that his reformed culture will institute alterations pertaining to self-creationism and embrace a common recognition with another's pain and humiliation more than metaphysical principles invoking social sympathy and solidarity against expressions of cruelty to others.

My poeticized culture is one which has given the attempt to unite one's private ways of dealing with one's finitude and one's sense of obligation to other human beings ... revolutionizing the world ... re-describing liberalism ... with the hope that culture as a whole can be poeticized rather than as the Enlightenment hope that can be rationalized or scientized.²⁴⁸

Rorty argues that solidarity is best created by empirical means (that which is verifiable by observation or experience) which has proven a better instructor than text books of theory or logic. Rorty's theory is constructed upon the following assumption that: Empathy enters "usually imaginatively" ... "into the specific details of the lives of others, and not by extrapolating or manufacturing feelings on the basis of some theoretical and antecedently-held view of common human nature or rights." Such imaginative entry is best facilitated, he claims, not through "theology, science, [and]

²⁴⁷ Rorty, *CIS*, 52-53.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 53, 68.

philosophy" ... which traditionally seek solidarity through the discovery of universal human nature but through ... "novels and ethnographies" ... "sensitizing one to the pain of those who do not speak our language."²⁴⁹

Thus Rorty assumes as the basis for solidarity one universal human trait which does transcend the historical and linguistic contingency that post-Enlightenment western culture increasingly accepts as the sole determinant and constituent of human nature: "the capacity to feel pain."²⁵⁰

Rorty's poeticized culture may be too good to be true offering freedom to its subjects, providing empathy for those living under the shadow of despair and pain. Rorty's culture provides a simplified life void of the institutionalized tutelage and vocabulary of the Enlightenment where the quest for absolutes, a passion for truth or intelligence is not a requirement. There will be those who are able to do the thinking for them such as strong poets and revolutionaries. For Rorty this is a hope filled community confidently solidified by the recognition that the reconstructive process is always a consideration by which circumstance offers an evolutionary quality to unmake what was made and to reconstruct what was.²⁵¹ But is Rorty's poeticized culture all that it seems to be.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., xv-xvi, 84-85, 192-193, 93-94.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 192.

²⁵¹ A Poeticized culture is a literary culture needing no presiding disciplines in the sense of a ground or foundation. All it requires is recognition of the contingency of the vocabularies which constitute our beliefs and desires along with a sense that the purpose of these vocabularies is the practical one of affecting our desires rather than the theoretical one of discovering something final or absolute about the way things are. Thus Rorty makes bold statements such as "what we have made we can unmake." Hall, *Prophet of the New Pragmatism*, 21.

HEROES OF THE REVOLUTION

First we will discuss Rorty's poeticized hero's, a position in which he creates logic of mutual exclusion between either a pragmatist or a metaphysician, either a believer in an ahistorical God or a strong poet and self-creator who has the potential to direct their world toward a progressive environment of selfhood and community.

The heroes of the Rortyan poeticized culture are the iconoclast radicals unlike the warrior, the priest, the sage, or the truth-seeking "logical, objective scientist" enshrined as heroes of the modern era According to Rorty "this was a very bad idea and got us into all sorts of trouble and muddles."²⁵² Rorty positions the strong poet as his prototypical hero, one who gets rid of "Enlightenment vocabulary" and is no longer haunted by questions about relativism and the like.²⁵³

STRONG POET, ARTISTS, AND REVOLUTIONARIES

The Strong Poet

Rorty elevates the "strong poet" as his prototypical hero, one whose purpose is to eliminate "Enlightenment vocabulary" and is no longer distressed by questions concerning relativism.²⁵⁴

He also offers three ideas concerning literature in his support for the Romantic poets' message. First imagination is the core of humanity's ability and substitute's

²⁵² Rorty, *CIS*, 73.

²⁵³ Guignon, *Richard Rorty*, 140.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

argumentative reasoning is replaced by linguistic creativity as the chief tool of societal evolution. Rorty claims:

"Imagination, rather than reason, is the central human faculty." "Speaking differently" ... rather than ... "arguing well" ... is, and should be ... "the chief instrument of social change." ²⁵⁵

Second, Rorty claims the Romantic poet has the ability to see beyond situations that many individuals are short sighted, caught in a prison house of language, or are in need of assistance to see beyond their frozen over culture. These are victims of a type of modernist holocaust of the mind. They cannot reason or better yet imagine anything beyond their inbred circumstances while the poet is self empowered to focus on change and self development.

The task of the "liberal novelist, poet, or journalist" ... is to provide a voice for ... "victims of cruelty, people who are suffering" ... and unable to speak for themselves because ... "they are suffering too much to put new words together." ²⁵⁶

Third, Rorty claims that to develop hermeneutically sound arguments to ascertain truths conveyed by an author is not necessary given the historic element in which a writer was bred no longer applies to present day needs. In a sense Rorty is arguing for coloration of black in white movies to make them more relevant for the day against others who believe may believe coloring distorts the film maker's original mood. Nevertheless Rorty denounces those who sense that literature can provide moral structure for the present day societal mood. Thus literary criticism is not concerned with "explaining the real meaning of books" or "evaluating literary merit," but supplies

²⁵⁵ Rorty, *CIS*, 7.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

Rortyan poet ironists in their quest for self description whose mission remits traditional religion or any accepted moral absolutes in their belief that literature alone can provide access to moral truths.²⁵⁷

Rorty's strong poets are the creators of "de-divinized poetry. They are atheistic sociologic heroes who determine to remove themselves from the quest for objectivity, strive for solidarity, and seek to establish democratic communities that are open minded, curious, and free to grasp imaginative vistas. The true genius of the strong poet is not subject to a period of reflection but calls upon inner resources at his (masculine pronoun) disposal.²⁵⁸ Thus he is creative and "engaging in projects of self-creation, and reweaving the inherited scripts of their lives so as to "give birth" to themselves.²⁵⁹

Their purpose is to build upon liberally minded individuals who are creatively influential change agents such as poets, critics, and painters in contrast to those of the Enlightenment's choice of carpenters, dentists, and lawyers who follow the status quo, building upon traditional foundations of society as it were or those individuals of whom Rorty would define as factors in the frozen over culture.

The reason I cite poets, critics, and painters, rather than dentists, carpenters, and laborers, as having careers is that the former, more typically than the latter, are trying to make the future different from the past--trying to create a new role rather than to play an old role well. The difference is obviously not hard and fast, since there are such things as hack poetry and creative dentistry.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 94.

²⁵⁸ Note: The use of the masculine "his" emphasizes the Rortyan romantic mood toward the feminist in the reified utopian state.

²⁵⁹ Note: Rorty's seemingly inherited religious terminology - heart mind and soul (or, if you like, the things or persons one is obsessed with). Abjure (renounce) the temptation to tie in one's moral responsibilities to other people with one's relation to whatever idiosyncratic things or persons one loves. Rorty, *CIS*, 29.

But the creative artist, in a wide sense that includes critics, scientists, and scholars, provides the paradigm case of a career whose conclusion leaves the world a bit different from what it used to be.²⁶⁰

One need not wonder if Rorty is a strong elite poet given his acceptance of the poeticized culture and his Grand Narrative characterized by metaphoric vocabulary, and self-creation, rather than truth, rationality, and moral obligation.²⁶¹ The strong poet will instill the concept that there is nothing out there and words were created by humanity. Theirs is to remove objectivity and partisan solidarity in order to establish open and free democratic communities. Rorty's liberal utopia exists for the purpose of providing the space needed for creative individuals whose "method is to redescribe lots of things."²⁶² Rorty's strong poets or Ironists²⁶³ pursue projects of self-creation by reweaving personal history or inherited scripts of their lives in such a way as to give birth to themselves.

Strong poets fear being merely a copy or replica - a cultural clone. Thus the strong poet seeks to continually redescribe their (past) inherited life by turning the blind

²⁶⁰ The artist painter can be like a "sociopolitical campaign" since they "can be seen to have succeeded or failed--or, or more frequently, to have succeeded to a certain degree while still falling short of its initial aims" But the definition of "artist" still depends on the success or failure of his/her career; a failed artist might as well have been a dentist. Rorty, AOC, 121-122.

²⁶¹ The Elite poet is lifted to the rank of prophet to instill the sense that there is nothing out there and that words were created by humanity. Rorty, CIS, 4-5, 44.

²⁶² Ibid., 9.

²⁶³ Note: Affirming the importance of individual liberty, Rorty supports the understanding of Truth as a relative rather than an absolute concept and argues that the liberal ironist is always aware of the limitations of vocabulary in justifying philosophic positions. Rorty does not seek a foundation for ethical behavior, or moral obligation, beyond the realm of human experience; instead, he appeals to a sense of so-called solidarity based on shared reaction to human suffering. In reply to Rorty Douglas Groothuis states Rorty's light hearted approach to the abandonment of morality, objective truth, and reality itself out of fear of not being original is ironic. This is to establish humanity as judge of self as Rorty says to "to solve doubts, their (ironist) criterion of private perfection, is autonomy rather than affiliation to a power other than themselves," (Rorty, CIS, 97). Rorty's goal says Groothuis fits the description of "the ungodliness and chaos during the times of judges. "In those days Israel had no king, everyone did as they saw fit" (Judges 21:25). Groothuis, *Truth Decay*, 198-199.

impress against itself by creatively asserting a personal behavioral imprint on time and creation. The quest of the strong poet is to succeed in an enterprise of saying “thus I willed it” to the past – and what Bloom calls providing personal salvation by “giving birth to oneself.”²⁶⁴

The future is no mere rhetorical alibi for Rorty; it is a fundamental principle of his thought. For him, those who change the world are models of human existence, and the “strong poet” is a hero.²⁶⁵ When he declares that “the creative artist, in a wide sense that includes critics, scientists, and scholars, provides the paradigm case of a career whose conclusion leaves the world a bit different from what it used to be.”²⁶⁶ He implicitly makes a case for himself as firebrand philosopher and standout in the spheres of art and politics, and a preemptive strike against his would-be traditional philosopher critics. Rorty affirms the possibility of “intellectual and moral progress,” which he envisages “as a history of increasingly useful metaphors rather than of increasing understanding of how things really are.”²⁶⁷

Rorty imagines the day when metaphysical language and ideals pass away and poetics fill the void establishing an ideal atheistic society where the very desire for the metaphysical model no longer exists and where we shall find social sympathy beyond transcendent rhetoric and humanity may find solidarity against evil and cruelty.

²⁶⁴ Rorty, *CIS*, 29, 40, 97. We do not need to question if Rorty considers himself one of the elite strong poets of our time since he advocates a poeticized culture and in his *Grand Narrative*, a culture characterized by a vocabulary which revolves around concepts pertaining to metaphor and self-creation rather than around notions of truth, rationality, and moral obligation. Rorty, *CIS*, 44.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁶⁶ Rorty, *AOC*, 122.

²⁶⁷ Stacey Meeker, *Utopia Limited: An Anthropological Response to Richard Rorty*, *Anthropoetics* – The Electronic Journal of Generative Anthropology, Volume IV, (1999), 7. [http:// www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/anthropoetics/](http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/anthropoetics/)

When we are freed from static ideas like "essence," "nature" and "foundations" we are free to be more generous, tolerant, imaginative, poetic and expansive in our affections and affinities. We will recognize the marvelous contingency within our own experience of selfhood, language and community and less responsibility to nonhuman will make us more sympathetic to the odd and interesting contingencies of others.²⁶⁸

Rorty seeks to free humanity by becoming familiar with one another's pain and humility and wishes to diminish hierarchical systems in order to establish common democratic communities. He is given to the assumption that as a strong poet, i.e. prophet, having inherited scripts woven into his belief system seems to authenticate his birth process supporting his self created autonomy – "thus I willed it."

One must struggle with Rorty's assumption that a strong poet's status, one of the elites, who rid themselves of metaphysical concepts and whose greatest fear is being a copy or replica when humanity naturally follows replication. Certainly his authenticity speaks of relativism which miscues his autonomous position as smug in comparison with dentists or carpenters whose skills rely upon foundational values to accomplish their tasks.

Rorty relies upon relativistic assumptions and contingency philosophic theory to address humanity's quest to find reality in a world void of enlightened reasoning and upon the assumption that the metaphysical will no longer be in vogue, in comparison with philosophic theory based upon rational constructs which seek coherent truth. Furthermore, it would be a lark for a carpenter to build a structure on relativism, just as it would a dentist's diagnosis based upon relativistic theorizing. This must hold true for

²⁶⁸ Rorty, *CIS*, 45.

Rorty's pragmatic democracy built upon contingency rather than coherent rationale lest chaos become entrenched within a pseudo-democracy touting methodical solidarity.

We have visited Rorty's strong poet and sought to give structure to his theorizing. Next we approach the creative artist who is not necessarily a hero in the Rortyan sense, but the character of the artist is essential to understand the Rortyan strong poet and revolutionary. The creative artist has been placed between our two heroes to emphasize giftedness.

The Creative Artist

The artist has above-average sensitivity to surroundings, and through observation and imagination becomes conscious of unhealthy inharmonious values and that of unrealized possibilities inherent in the context of society. The artist then is inspired as the entire organism moves toward activity; stirring up a store of attitudes and meanings derived from prior experience sunken within the subconscious.²⁶⁹

Rorty applauds the creatively minded liberal intellectual or Artists, in whatever career individuals choose as performers on the stage of life creatively envisioning societal change, willing to break with traditional modes of thinking and to open imaginary vistas to challenge societal systems.²⁷⁰ He believes with John Berger that artists are not subject to powerlessness, meaning an awareness of being moved about

²⁶⁹ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, Francis Shoemaker, *Aesthetic Experience and the Humanities: Modern Ideas of Aesthetic Experience in the Reading of World Literature*, (Columbia University Press, 1943), 118, 345, 65.

²⁷⁰ Careers of "artists" are likened to a "sociopolitical campaign" in that they "can be seen to have succeeded or failed--or, or more frequently, to have succeeded to a certain degree while still falling short of its initial aims" (*Achieving* 121-22). But the definition of "artist" still depends on the success or failure of his/her career; a failed artist might as well have been a dentist. *AOC*, 121-122. One can say that success of one's career is how many individuals follow your teachings, read an author, or the impact made upon humanity.

by a social milieu or a tide stronger than one's own volition causing personal interaction with one's inherited ethos while powerfulness resides in a sense of being a prime mover, a decider, able to affect distant events.²⁷¹

For Rorty the literary artist makes the greatest contribution to society providing a cooperative intelligence toward solidarity. They have the power of narrative at their disposal to paint a landscape in the readers mind with words that can express pain, suffering, and humiliation through the hourglass of history to birth truthful reality. The artist possesses courage to remain in the present and to transgress history's legend by painting over a previous author's script to life.²⁷²

Wittgenstein, one of Rorty's artistic heroes, sought to change traditional academic philosophy from one of higher education to one of practicality:

Wittgenstein played the role of a pragmatist within the philosophy of language, decentralizing philosophy of language itself. Wittgenstein was a threatening figure because he contributed substantially to detranscendentalizing and deprofessionalizing philosophy. Hence, academic philosophers in America and England always had an ambiguous reaction to him. On the one hand, he is obviously the greatest figure in the field; on the other, he is a danger to the profession. All this aside, Wittgenstein has a great appeal or me. As Stanley Cavell says, what's remarkable about the two great

²⁷¹ Nigel Rapport, *Transcendent Individual: Towards a Literary and Liberal Anthropology*, (London, Rutledge, 1997), 27.

²⁷² Note: The Rortyan artist is unique for the reason they may without hesitation decide to paint over another's portrait of reality or to leave a small portion exposed beneath representing a glimpse of life giving way to a future hope.

philosophers of the twentieth century is that Wittgenstein writes as if he had read nothing, while Heidegger writes as if he had read everything.²⁷³

Rorty is correct to a degree. Influential leaders seem to possess an awareness of forces around them and have the presence to resist conformity to social pressures. Christians also may take note of the importance of resisting forces of societal impress, but seem to have lost the presence of Christ for personal holiness as a result the church is weakened in its stand against wickedness. But Rorty misses the point that true lasting strength comes from the transcendent, and it is necessary for Christians to find renewal in Christ and to develop modes of intelligent action pertinent to challenge the present world ethos.

Rorty fails to require anything from the artist other than inspiration to lead them toward action, and apparently any action that is relevant to social and political reformation. But inspiration while playing a necessary role in true artful expression by itself it is not reasonable. There is a difference between “mere inspiration and true inspiration.” Consequently it is knowledge that gives inspiration weight and substance escorting us further than emotion to guide us to the beauty of truth. The Christian believes inspiration is the communication of truth that cannot otherwise be discovered, and has to do with the discovery and recording of truth not making it.

Yet for Rorty and the postmodernist the artist aspires no longer to represent or express the essence or nature of anything but pluralism followed by a parade of diversity, ethnicity, multiplicity, and a sterility of aimless ideas. Plato sees such

²⁷³ Giovanna Borradori, Rosanna Crocitto, *The American Philosopher: Conversations with Quine, Davidson, Putnam, Nozick, Danto, Rorty, Cavell, Macintyre, and Kuhn*, (University of Chicago Press, 1994), 107.

reasoning as shallow and childish, emotion without significant means such as a tear filled child who cannot adequately express why it's nevertheless dependent upon parental wisdom and knowledge to fill the void.

Inspiration by itself is only a maddening inner suggestion, a direction toward something deeper than is experienced in everyday life, beyond what is observable in phenomenal reality.²⁷⁴

Inspiration alone cannot determine what the artist is to search for and find. The inspired artist bedazzles everyone by apparent awe-inspiring ecstatic words of wonderment and by the seeming depth of their concentration but they fail to connect with the most fundamental core of what they represent, the core of clear reality, the realm of structure.

Plato understood that inspiration possess dangers if knowledge is vacant and was convinced that without a sure footing, inspiration is like the wind driving a ship without a helmsman who alone has the knowledge to discern the true path the vessel is to take.

As madness, inspiration impels artists on, but only knowledge can guide their search. If inspiration is like the wind all vessels need for movement, knowledge is the helm. Art based on mere inspiration, therefore, or art which is pure venting, loses itself among the lures of particular phenomena. It differs from true art, which seeks for the universal, the archetypal: true art is "of the whole."²⁷⁵

²⁷⁴ David Van Biema, *God is a Postmodern*, (Time Magazine Achieve, December 17, 2001 Vol. 158 No. 26).

²⁷⁵ Ignacio Gotz, *On Inspiration*, (Cross Currents, Vol. 48, 1998), 1."

Plato describes unchecked inspiration as “childish, self-contradictory, full of errors, impious, and even immoral.”²⁷⁶ He calls for the necessity of proper discernment and warns that inspirational superficiality must be interpreted by the artist not an onlooker furthermore if the artist is not grounded in the real knowledge of truth; they are most likely to err.

Inspiration as beauty and ugliness and everything between are held in the eye of the beholder. Rorty and postmodernists modify the statement to mean beauty becomes socially and culturally relevant giving identity to the perceiver in turn an artistic creation or evaluation can be deconstructed into various contingent social elements such as class, gender, race, and historical epoch. But this does not necessitate solidarity but furthers dissension. The danger of such rationale is art cannot convey objective truth, although it can express styles, emotions, political passions, and ever-shifting cultural trends.

Nevertheless such inspirational prompting must come under the knowledge of truth. This does not negate the fact that men come to the recognition of values in a normal psychological and sociological way. Non-Christian humanists usually confuse the psychological process by which one comes to adopt a value and the epistemological (and ontological) basis for believing it. However, simply because one came to know mathematical truths through a sociological process does not mean math

²⁷⁶ Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), especially chap. 3 and notes, and Marvin W. Meyer, ed., *The Ancient Mysteries* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987). Also, briefly, Ignacio L. Gotz, "A Note on Myth, the Mysteries, and Teaching in Plato's Republic," *Alexandria* 3 (1995): 271-75.

has only a sociological basis. One plus three equals four regardless of the social flux. So it is with absolute moral values.²⁷⁷

In the early church as today Christians fall victim to contemporary artists who are convincing wolves in sheep's clothing. It is necessary then for Christians and Christian leaders to enable themselves to be knowledgably discerning, to resist influences and habitual claims that ethics are created by men rather than discovered. Theirs is to establish a humanistic mindset eliminating metaphysical language, and hiding from the transcendent by behaving he no longer exists. Perhaps the greatest blasphemy of Rorty and the postmoderns is to redirect terminology which God has given exclusively to the church and to speak a new world into existence or to say "thus I willed it."²⁷⁸

The impact of the Arts upon the soul of American society is undetermined yet one can imagine the power of music and widespread influence of MTV upon the youth culture. The vehicle of television promotes a vast diversity of programming affecting the moral fabric of society from individual choice to political affiliation. Radio talk shows categorize and politicize individual preferences with an almost a chaotic approach.

We have chosen to place the creative artist between the strong poet and the political revolutionary to characterize Rorty's broader societal spectrum. The literary artist was chosen among many of the Arts being a particular passion of Rorty. The

²⁷⁷ Norman L. Geisler, and Paul D. Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1980), 376.

²⁷⁸ It is "that inexplicable power" which the divine Spirit put forth of old on the authors of the Holy Scripture, in order to their guidance even in the employment of words they used, and to preserve them alike from all error and from all omission." Op. cit., p. 34. Inspiration thus is really "inexplicable." It is power put forth by the Holy Spirit, but we don't know exactly how that power operated. Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Introduction To The New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, WM. B Eerdmans Printing Company, 1976), 107.

second of Rorty's heroes is "the political revolutionary" a title Rorty uses to offset Biblical authoritarianism boasting of priests and prophets who had assumed to speak on God's behalf. But for Rorty organized religion is a catalyst for oppression and dogmatism.

Rorty offers us a society in which true is according to whatever an encounter seems to be. For that reason the liberal society is well served without philosophical foundations, and the revolutionary is called to the task of persuasion rather than force, and by reform rather than revolution, by the free open encounters of present linguistic experience and other practices. Here Rorty offer us the political revolutionary.

The Political Revolutionary

The political revolutionary is heroic heir to the Romantic Movement who unlike the strong poet's emphasis on de-divinized poetry is an activist with a de-divinized conscious, replacing the traditionally known prophets who act in obedience to the will of God; the revolutionary reformer takes responsibility for their decisions and actions being moved "by nothing save the thought of social justice."²⁷⁹

Rorty applauds the manner in which the Romantic poets and the political revolutionaries conspire to slay God the Father, and thence to weed out the vestiges of the divine in political life. The revolution is, of course unfinished. "Reason" and "poetic genius," the standards used by the rationalist and Romantics, respectively, must

²⁷⁹ Rorty, *PSH*, 13.

themselves be de-divinized. When this is done, we shall have completed what was stated at the beginning of the modern age.²⁸⁰

Does this mean the revolutionary is a sociopath, a change agent who lacks conscience and is responsible only to other gifted advocates of the tribal community? This seems to smack of a possible totalitarian regime that is both hierarchical and subservient all of which Rorty is seeking to eliminate. What of the converts to the Rortyan dream? Are they the “We” whom Rorty speaks who seek to spread an ever growing participation in pluralistic pragmatism offering nothing deeper than solidarity or multiple contingencies of random and dubiously relevant circumstances?

In Rorty’s view, this is not necessarily true. According to Rorty the job title of the revolutionary and poet is not to make life easier or safer for the public sphere rather to benefit their office. “[A]n ideal liberal society is one which. . . . has no purpose . . . except to make life easier for poets and revolutionaries while seeing to it that they make life harder for others only by words, not deeds.”²⁸¹

Thus we understand the Revolutionary is a change agent who is particularly gifted in persuasion not force to bring solidarity to the liberal community characterizing emancipation speaking loudly for tolerance suitable for linguistic reform.

But there must be more to institute linguistic change than respectable tolerance to dispel inappropriate language games given that language is a part of behavioral

²⁸⁰ Hall, *Prophet of the New Pragmatism*, 15-17.

²⁸¹ Rorty’s philosophy is misguided let alone his responsible characters whose major job is to appease strong poets and he is not able to give us historic or hypothetical situations. Nevertheless he seeks to eliminate the metaphysical from his mind by cleansing his vocabulary at his own peril. It is similar to the child who refuses to listen to warning the stove is hot but finds that although the term “hot” is eliminated the stove will still have the same affect. We cannot think away reality. Rorty, *CIS*, 52, 60.

expression. Thus we must image the revolutionary is granted power in the form of establishing correct criterion for behavior in the liberal society. One can only hope making life easier for poets and revolutionaries will not result in a form of totalitarianism instituted to achieve the height tolerance demands. Although Rorty does not give details how linguistic tolerance can be achieved one may imagine the power of the written press, media, television, and proposed books are highly qualified vehicles to socialize the masses.²⁸²

Finally we may ask the question why Rorty adds the utopian revolutionaries to his list of heroes much later than his Strong Poet. First, Rorty does not wish revolution to become synonymous with violence nor the revolutionary with chaos! Rather it is to be used when needed to complement our purposes as a term taken from our tool box of expressions and reconfigured to fit an appropriate situation. For example Rorty's absolutist dogmas concerning the physicality of the human nature: The modern term drunkard symbolized as a social outcast who is portrayed as an individual whom has chosen that life style and may be a victim of ridicule, is replaced by the politically correct term alcoholic symbolizing human pain and humiliation whose lifestyle is contingent upon a genetic disorder. Thus Rorty's resolve is to abstain from the assumption that humanity has a nature of its own.

There is no human nature which was once, or still is, in chains. Rather, our species has -- ever since it developed language -- been making up a nature for itself . . . Lately our species has been making up a particularly good nature for itself -- that produced by the institutions of the liberal west. When we praise

²⁸² The positive views of solidarity posed by Rorty's earlier writings suggest a narrower construct than first implied. If we return to Rorty's usage of the plural "We," "our community," combined with "solidarity" (keeping with his fraternal or comrade mindset whose antonym is weighted with hostility) as the only antidote to epistemological validity (being the distinction between justified belief and opinion) arrives at chaos.

this development, we pragmatists drop the revolutionary rhetoric of emancipation and unmasking in favor of reformist rhetoric about increased tolerance and decreased suffering.²⁸³

Since Rortyan pragmatism leaves no room for human nature, in a sense he leaves all humanity for dead having but one purpose – solidarity, and that in the midst of chaos. He leaves the hopes of humanity in the hands of human instinct, reason without foundation, and salvation at the door of societal evolution.²⁸⁴ He leaves no room for philosophy because it does not work for him. He calls himself a strong poet and a revolutionary having no moral reference point, fears extreme morality, and avoids humanity's ills classifying them like other animals. His rhetoric of freedom changes nothing, his values are empty, and his soul lost to the inner pain of humankind, and it would seem all this is to provide a better life for himself and other strong poets and revolutionaries.

Particularly interesting is Rorty's sense of passion and expression which he finds in the strong poet, artist, and revolutionary, terms which he feels qualifies an individual to have a sense of legitimacy although he provides no measure to weigh his outcome. Yet Rorty touches upon a key element within the postmodern ethos concerning the Christian role in society since feeling and action speak louder than words in contrast to the modern era where zealous expression was considered illegitimate or childish. Today it is important the Christian express passion for Christ publicly and civilly as reformers closed in humility before the watchful eye of a world seeking hope.

²⁸³ Rorty, *ORT*, 213.

²⁸⁴ One may add the term salvation may replace the metaphysical assumption that humanity is evil and in need of a savior to free humanity from sin and judgment. Rorty would prefer the term to be reconstructed to mean the self creative energy needed within an individual's life to discard transcendent claims in hope of a better sociologic future.

The Rortyan society is one in which true is according to whatever an encounter seems to be. For that reason the liberal society is well served without philosophical foundations and the revolutionary is called to the task of persuasion rather than force, and by reform rather than revolution, by the free open encounters of present linguistic experience and other practices.

Rorty is convinced when moral progress and social solidarity are made possible the metaphysical void will be replaced by poetics. The Strong poet's desire for self-creation becomes the very opposite of objectivity replacing the theologian and the metaphysician's desire to be guided and constrained by nonhuman powers. Thus Pragmatism freely discards concepts of essence, nature, and foundations by encompassing generosity, tolerance, imagination, and poetic achievement while recognizing the need for social sympathy and solidarity against expressions of societal cruelty.²⁸⁵

We have charted this course defining Rorty's contention that the chief innovators of morality within pragmatic romanticism are the strong poet, artist, and revolutionary whose vocabulary is a poetic achievement, contingent upon cultural resources from which it is composed. Rorty's grasp of the arts, however whimsical it may be, agrees with Dewey that "imagination is the chief instrument of the good ... art is more than moralities ... and the moral prophets of humanity have always been poets even though they spoke in free verse and by parable."²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵ Rorty, *CIS*, xxix.

²⁸⁶ Rorty contends the moral prophets of humanity have always been the poets even though they spoke in free verse or by parable" choosing to step beyond the traditional and status quo. Dewey, *Art as Experience* as Rorty describes Dewey's poeticized view of culture. Rorty, *CIS* 68-69.

We shall next see the progressive nature of romanticism as it coexists with nihilism to have a dulling effect upon the reasoning of the mind dwelling upon issues deeper than surface applications while producing a type of sleepwalking of the soul where the conscious seems lifeless and where emotions become heightened. Nihilism is also the catalyst of aesthetic self creationism eliminating necessary behavioral standards. So Rorty finds romanticism fertile soil to sow his seeds of pragmatism and to reconfigure the traditional American landscape or in Rortyan terminology “words that hold us captive“ in a prison house of language, insisting “what is made is artificial rather than natural and can be unmade by using different vocabulary than that of traditional philosophy.”²⁸⁷

Nihilism and the Artful Dance of Truth

Romantic nihilism and postmodernism play important roles in the Rortyan scheme to extinguish the metaphysical excuse for reality and to reroute history around a mountain of false absolutism laying claim to the transcendent. Rorty shares a similar mindset with Friedrich Nietzsche’s philosophical nihilism “there is no objective order or structure in the world expect what we give it” ... “every belief, every considering something – true is necessarily false because there is simply no true world.” Nietzsche and Rorty believe romantic nihilism requires a “radical repudiation of all imposed

²⁸⁷ The pragmatist tradition insists “that they are made – are artificial rather than natural and can be unmade by using different vocabulary than that which the philosophical tradition has used.” Rorty goes on to say “the Cartesian mind is an entity whose relations with the rest of the universe are representational rather than causal. So to rid our thinking we need to stop thinking of words as representations and to start thinking of them as nodes in the causal network which binds the organism together with its environment. Rorty, *PSH*, xxii-xxiii.

values and meaning ... not only the belief that everything deserves to perish, but one actually puts one's shoulders to the plough, one destroys."²⁸⁸

It is necessary for Rorty to burn bridges or ladders that hinder the human spirit to find harmonious self expression with one's evolutionary development. His is to prove transcendent truths are simply a mirror of nature and not that of a unfathomable hierarchical sovereign.

The Desire for Self-Creation

It is not what is out there, the unfathomable, which is important to the development of the Rortyan utopia that is to free all humans from fables and laws that have for centuries restricted the achievement of the human spirit to aid those living in pain and humility. The Rortyan dance of truth follows the liberal ironist²⁸⁹ those having broken free from the prison house of language do more than desire freedom,

²⁸⁸ Nihilism is the belief that all values are baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated. It is often associated with extreme pessimism and a radical skepticism that condemns existence. A true nihilist would believe in nothing, have no loyalties, and no purpose other than, perhaps, an impulse to destroy. While few philosophers would claim to be nihilists, nihilism is most often associated with Friedrich Nietzsche who argued that its corrosive effects would eventually destroy all moral, religious, and metaphysical convictions and precipitate the greatest crisis in human history. In the 20th century, nihilistic themes--epistemological failure, value destruction, and cosmic purposelessness--have preoccupied artists, social critics, and philosophers. Mid-century, for example, the existentialists helped popularize tenets of nihilism in their attempts to blunt its destructive potential. By the end of the century, existential despair as a response to nihilism gave way to an attitude of indifference, often associated with anti-foundationalism. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power: Notes from 1883-1888*, Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, (New York: Random House, I, & 2), p.9.

²⁸⁹ Note: Rorty develops a pragmatic account of what he terms the liberal ironist—the individual whose sense of selfhood is largely an act of self creation. Affirming the importance of individual liberty, Rorty supports the understanding of Truth as a relative rather than an absolute concept and argues that the liberal ironist is always aware of the limitations of vocabulary in justifying philosophic positions. Rorty does not seek a foundation for ethical behavior, or moral obligation, beyond the realm of human experience; instead, he appeals to a sense of so-called solidarity based on shared reaction to human suffering. Furthermore what one might describe as normal nihilism Rorty may call irony.

they will battle for it. At their most intrepid they seek to become what Rorty terms a “knight of autonomy.”²⁹⁰ It is not improbable considering Rorty’s plan to equip his freedom fighters²⁹¹ to free Christians’ from a life of humility and pain under God’s laws and as sympathetic therapists of truth to present a better way.

We must remember Rorty’s artful dance of truth is conformed to a type of rhythm made up of certain prevailing words which are current within a culture marked by a “basic pattern of the relations of the individual to ones’ environment” and intimately woven into the fabric of a cultures value system. The task of the Arts, at least for Rorty, is to guide in a cumulative process, (here Rortyan nihilism) “toward a consummating close” imposed by society’s external form of art speaking for change.²⁹² Thus Rhythm is inevitable and falls into a “psychological anthropological conception of types of literature recognizable through their internal moods of lyric spontaneity.”²⁹³ With this in mind it is necessary that Christians become conscious of literature and liberal media’s role to subtly remove or secularize metaphysical language.

²⁹⁰ Rorty, *EHO*, 194.

²⁹¹ “Each medium involves its own disciplines. The symbolic nature of language and its unique value as the cumulative content of human culture demands that the author organize his materials with a critical eye toward his readers’ clear understanding. In his role of creator-critic the artist does not act in a judicial capacity. He is not concerned with an absolute good or bad, right or wrong, but with the balanced form which his concept of human values is assuming under his conscious design. “What might be or might have been stands always in contrast with what is or has been in a way only words are capable of conveying.” Shoemaker, *Aesthetic Experience*, 89.

²⁹² Note: According to Dewey abstract emotions or feelings become reified (more concrete or real) as instincts evolve into verbal constructs forming truth and moral values. Rorty contends that moralists forget that it is grounded in a process of imagination and invention in the artful dance of organism and environment. Thus morality is defined as a vocabulary and as such it is a poetic achievement, dependent upon the cultural resources from which it is composed, and thus always contingent.

²⁹³ Rhythmic form may then be defined as the operation of forces that carry the experience of an event, object, scene, and situation to its own integral fulfillment.” Furthermore, the aesthetic experience for the “work of art is complete only as it works in the experience of others than the one who created it.” Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 106.

Nihilism allows the pragmatist to openly reject moral values established upon objective standards of correspondence allowing self creation to “fill the void left by the demise of the desire for objectivity.”²⁹⁴

Rorty agrees with Dewey it is possible to dispute objective moralists on the grounds that all truths are established by imagination and invention whereby perfection may become a goal to autonomy.

The Ironist goal is autonomy understood as self-creation ... To the extent that this is a genuinely private goal, it probably can most easily be pursued in a society that is tolerant, makes minimal public demands on its citizens, and offers as great as possible a range of opportunities for individual self-fulfillment ... that there is an essentially selfish strategic ground for Ironists to make common cause with liberalism, so long, presumably, as their attempts to promote or perpetuate liberalism do not overburden their efforts at self-perfection.²⁹⁵

Rorty's system eliminates foundational values, metaphysical language, and establishes the liberal Ironist's as iconoclast revolutionaries who invest themselves to free Western society from restraints of traditionalism that science and the academy have failed to achieve. As a result Rorty's reality rests in the poetic rhythm of humanity's dance with nature's evolutionary quest to change the moral face of humanity. Yet the Rortyan dream seems clouded in its ability to release humanity from

²⁹⁴ For Rorty, self-creation is possible only in the space left by the demise of the desire for "objectivity"; that is, the strong poet's desire for imaginative self-creation becomes the very opposite—and takes the place of—the theologian's and the metaphysician's desire to be "guided" and "constrained" by nonhuman powers, and not left to their own devices. Rorty, CIS, xxxix. It seems obvious that the Rortyan quest for the ideal society will be atheistic, secular through and through, one in which no trace of divinity or transcendence remains, and in which humanity would no longer feel the desire – or see the need- to be responsible to nonhuman forces. Rorty, CIS, 45.

²⁹⁵ Augustine Lawler, and Dan McConkey, *Community and Public Thought Today*, (Praeger Publishers, 1998), 41, 42, 137.

humility and pain and has added chaos to his mystical spell. Perhaps Rorty is inclined to agree that chaos is a necessary outcome to release Western consensus from objective values born to modernism and to propel the West toward new utopian values steeped in self-creationism and communal solidarity, but adding relativistic nihilism to his web of beliefs Rorty complicates the matter of solidarity given nihilism's fragmentation of truth.²⁹⁶

Rorty wholeheartedly supports pop nihilism's artistic bent toward the film industry and media as a means to instill revolutionary means to change social order where reality is redefined and our thinking is unsuspectingly reshaped.

Pop Nihilism and Hollywood

One of the major shifts in this century is the power to inform through the visual as the lines between reality and imagination are blurred.

There has been created a defined vacuum at the center of our culture where hope has no belief to rely upon, or better said, there is no over-arching story to life by which all the particulars can be interpreted clearly. This fragmentation has developed a situation whereby the intelligent public desires to hear from art what it does not hear

²⁹⁶ Rorty does not hide the fact that nihilism is a common dilemma in the sense that "Nothing grounds our practices, nothing legitimizes them, nothing shows them to be in touch with the way things are and concludes such anti-foundationalism must logically invite nihilism "faced with the nonhuman, the nonlinguistic, we no longer have the ability to overcome contingency and pain by appropriation and transformation, but only the ability to recognize contingency and pain." (Richard Rorty, *From Logic to Language to Play: A Plenary Address to the Inter American Congress, (Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association, Vol., 59, No. 5, .1986, 747-753.*

from theology, philosophy, and social theory, and what it cannot hear from pure science - a fuller, a more rational, more complete account of what and who human beings are and what is their purpose for life. According to Huston Smith, “If modern physics showed us a world at odds with our senses, postmodern physics is showing us one that is at odds with our imagination.” Can imagination be measured where no scale for measurement exists?²⁹⁷

The pursuit of knowledge without knowing who we are or why we exist, combined with a war on our imaginations by our entertainment industry leaves us at the mercy of a moral – less society.

Since its invention in the 1920s by American inventor and engineer Philo Taylor Farnsworth television has revolutionized the world and is most omnipresent today. Television or television technology is difficult to escape let alone its power of necessity. It has become a vital link to understanding our world and is often taken for granted as an essential part of our daily diet of imagery, information, and entertainment that fascinates the mind and stimulates the sensibilities all at the touch of a button.²⁹⁸

Today nearly 60 years after the invention of television teens are whisked away on magic carpet imagery, caught up in the action of video gaming, and laugh at psychotic or macabre, and when asked for a reason why they express themselves in such a way

²⁹⁷ Huston Smith, *Beyond the Postmodern Mind*, (Crossroad, New York, 1982).

²⁹⁸ The technological age has arrived and its advancements are felt daily as old systems are replaced by new ones causing individual's to camp outside stores awaiting the sale of the newest and best that can be provided. Technology may be arguably the flowering of the modern scientific age or the last standing virtue of enlightenment born objectivity, nevertheless, a changing of the guard has occurred in public programming replacing traditional family morals that provided ethical instruction i.e., “Father Knows Best,” “Leave it Beaver,” or “Walton’s” etc. are replaced as irrelevant by open minded entertainment such as “Married with Children,” “Three’s Company,” and “Sex in the City.”

they say “its only television.” Or is it? It is almost as if they live in that world, and they do not even notice it anymore until somehow, someone with a counter perspective addresses the subject and we discover both an external and internal disorientation.

Although some may remain steadfast in assertions that television is only an entertainment medium, but statistics speak differently. America models itself after the Hollywood image from clothes, reconstructive surgery, sex appeal, and identity from a world of unreality. According to the American Family Association teens in their early development see:

15,000 sexual acts or innuendoes and a total of 33,000 murders and 200,000 acts of random violence in a single year ... according to psychologists TV violence and socially aggressive behavior, disappearing moral standards and their relationship to humor are behaviorally identical ... psychologists assert behavioral keys proceed from ... observational learning (attention, retention, motivation, and potential reproduction) and the selection of a model one chooses to imitate ... furthermore, TV violence desensitizes the very young and plays a larger role in children’s aggression than poverty, race, or parental behavior.²⁹⁹

Some state that humor is akin to tears but Hollywood’s humor is form of psychological reform. Hollywood promotes an age old principle that laughter can be conceived as a mode of teaching. The arts follow French Playwright Moliere’s belief that the comic sought “to correct through amusement.” Philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau thought that “comedy performed no useful social function even at its best, and might at its worst lead directly to corruption and immorality.” Thus to make light of immorality is a powerful tool for behavioral acceptance and taints the soul from inner conviction that everything is tolerably acceptable.

²⁹⁹ Joe Mcnamara, Anything Goes: Moral Bankruptcy of Television and Hollywood, USA Today, Vol. 126, 1998, 62.

Raunchily destructive comic attitudes toward traditional virtues and families did not assume center stage overnight. For centuries, laughter was seen as a method of teaching, following French playwright Moliere's belief that the comic sought "to correct through amusement." Philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, according to author J.Y.T. Grieg, thought that "comedy performed no useful social function even at its best, and might at its worst lead directly to corruption and immorality."³⁰⁰

Humor or comedy is seen as a type of relief valve which can "remove the lid of our culture" and allows humanity to be animals as programming stretches into minutes and half-hour shows, to entire years of television production, and, for some, to a way of life. Jokes involving aggression derive their peculiar delightfulness from the fact that we have bound up impulses which we cannot unleash in serious life.

It would seem Hollywood writers and producers have taken the responsibility to be gods of the arts reforming humanity from old taboos ravaging the roots of cultural tradition. They are not alone, as Rorty agrees God and human rights are superstitions contrivances,³⁰¹ and would encourage writers, actors and producers to continue to change old paradigms or terminology such as faith, belief, hope, and salvation or philosophical linguistic formulations based upon reality, truth, and objectivity.³⁰² Morality is a vocabulary and as such it is a poetic achievement dependent upon the cultural resources from which it is composed, and is always contingent.³⁰³

Dewey thought as I do, that the vocabulary which centres around these traditional distinctions has become an obstacle to our social hopes. The

³⁰⁰ Humor has become a form of psychological violence ... In the case of situation comedies, their laughter directed towards premarital or extramarital sex constitutes positive reinforcement with documentable -- some would say detestably corrosive -- consequences. ... The worst mistake young men or women can make involves choosing abstinence when everything around them reflects the sexual obsession that supposedly typifies life in America. Ibid.

³⁰¹ Rorty, *PSH*, 84.

³⁰² Rorty, *ORT*, 24.

³⁰³ Rorty, *CIS*, 68-69.

obstacles in which Rorty describes are platonic dualisms such as: appearance - reality, matter - mind, made - found, sensible - intellectual, etc.³⁰⁴

Although Hollywood panders to personal divinity and self-creationism to change moral constructs of America and though Rorty's philosophy may mirror their efforts to release America from its prison house of language, Hollywood's track record is all but impressive given their passionate desire for deconstruction of truth only to be overshadowed by their thirst for wealth.

There is another cave we seek to explore in which the age of technology and television have carved into the soul of humanity a nihilism that has raped the human mind of its substantial meaning of life as Hollywood executives and writers lower the level of intelligence and disclose with brainless sex, profanity, nudity, and vulgarity have anesthetized, and eventually will annihilate, the ability of an audience to react positively to anything higher or ennobling³⁰⁵ meaning to believe in a transcendent God is laughably silly.

Rorty concurs:

There is no universal supernatural court of law before which humanity stands ... truth is not out there ... thus, we tell stories, write poems, compose philosophies and theologies or construct theories to reduce the tensions and thus satisfy our complex need for meaning and understanding.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ Ibid., xi.

³⁰⁵ The writers and producers responsible for such destruction could give their audiences much more, but they choose not to. They have opted for the dollar-laden low road, competing to see who can get away with the most first, afraid not to follow the pack for fear of being characterized as out of step with Hollywood leadership. Instead of intelligence, integrity, and inspiration, viewers get what one producer ordered: "We were told to lose the contrived plot stuff ... and [add] ... more big hair and breasts." What drives some of the most talented people in the world to such demi-moronic nihilism? These very same people have shown, time and again, they can produce laughter combined with sophistication and optimism, but they will not. Instead, we get the bubonic plague. McNamara, *Anything Goes*, 62.

³⁰⁶ Rorty, *PSH*, xxx; *ORT*, 24, 63-77.

It is without doubt Hollywood has an effect upon the moral values and standards which portray our autonomous spirit. But nihilism has played a role in the psychological development of Americans as well.

There are differing types of nihilism – more specifically the Hollywood brand is existential affecting humankind's core moral values spawning indifference.

The barren mind of the nihilist is one in which is easily controlled, filled, and manipulated, and Hollywood's existential and epistemological nihilisms are tools aiding antifoundationalist claims that values are baseless and reality cannot be known, that is, until something genuinely more palatable replaces it.³⁰⁷

In light of Hollywood's dogma to distort values of right and wrong by shifting emphasis toward relatively palatable (grey) themes of human behavior and to establish truth as an evolutionary transitional state is to fragment morals and eliminate knowledge as applicable to the need of the day. If we apply wealth as an example Hollywood produces themes whereby an individual's character is represented by prosperity and may be achieved without responsibility toward serving one's society given pragmatism demands are shallow acts toward being rather than acting upon a plan that both produces individual character and service toward one's neighbor.

It is said the "nihilist" is used to:

³⁰⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche argued that the corrosiveness of Nihilism would eventually destroy all moral, religious, and metaphysical convictions and precipitate the greatest crisis in human history. In the 20th century, nihilistic themes--epistemological failure, value destruction, and cosmic purposelessness--have preoccupied artists, social critics, and philosophers. It's helpful to note that Nietzsche believed we could--at a terrible price--eventually work through nihilism. If we survived the process of destroying all interpretations of the world, we could then perhaps discover the correct course for humanity. Alan Prat, Nihilism, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy [database on-line], available from; <http://www.iep.utm.-.edu/n/nihilism.htm>

Characterize the postmodern man, a dehumanized conformist, alienated, indifferent, and baffled, directing psychological energy into hedonistic narcissism or into a deep resentment that often explodes in violence. This perspective is derived from the existentialists' reflections on nihilism stripped of any hopeful expectations, leaving only the experience of sickness, decay, and disintegration.³⁰⁸

Visual entertainment, like television, has the potential to fragment the mind, something that is less than whole shaped by an attitude that knowledge is past finding out and truth is fleeting. The West is caught in a world of information overload causing the mind to become listless in a quicksand of hopeless existence. As an antifoundationalist Rorty believes that to recognize our hopeless state is to understand and aid others of the same human order.

Nothing grounds our practices, nothing legitimizes them, and nothing shoes them to be in touch with the way things are.”³⁰⁹ In this type of epistemological impasse Rorty concludes, leads inevitably to nihilism. “Faced with the nonhuman, the nonlinguistic, we no longer have the ability to overcome contingency and pain by appropriation and transformation, but only the ability to recognize contingency and pain.”³¹⁰

One example of Hollywood’s fragmentation is mythologizing life by deconstructing how life is interpreted from a more traditional view and then by reinterpreting life’s narrative into a socialized forms by replacing significance with irony³¹¹ and next by fragmented imaginary realism.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Rorty, *From Logic to Language to Play*, 747 -753.

³¹⁰ Rorty, *CIS*, 57.

³¹¹ The morality behind both *Pulp Fiction* and *South Park* is the same: death is funny, nothing is sacred, and everything is absurd. The thirst for meaning, order, and wholeness--which marked the philosophical absurdity of Samuel Beckett and Albert Camus--is gone. There are only fragments of sacred traditions, which are cut and pasted together with postmodern trivialities. There is no tragedy, because there is no longing for something better; there is only darkness, and the futile laughter of a trivializing culture ... The deconstructionists and postmodernists who rule over the academy are simply ironists and cynics in different guises. The deconstructionist actively (and spitefully) debunks order and tradition. He attempts

The fragmented world of postmodernism and Rorty's pragmatic stance is filtered through splintered imagery. The Wizard of OZ represents a style of fragmentation. At one moment Dorothy is living in a black and white reality the next moment she is whisked away in her home by a voracious tornado, lands in an imaginary world, with imaginary friends, and one wicked witch all dressed in techno-color. She frees the little people of Munchkin Land, rids OZ of the wicked witch of the West, restores her three friends lost virtues – heart, brain, and courage, and then by the help of her ruby red slippers she returns to her black and white reality in a farmhouse in Kansas surrounded by her friends.

This writer is not seeking to be critical of the film but seeks to illustrate how Hollywood can produce a film in which life is interpreted by feelings and how reality can be pragmatically reinterpreted from a boring black and white picture of despair to a new world on the other side of the rainbow that is colorful, imaginary, and hopeful.

Another form of Hollywood's fragmentation of the mind is found in television's quick moving imagery that often shifts from the dramatic to the light hearted.³¹² The

to show that morality and reason are illusions. Postmodernists, for their part, celebrate the splintering of morality as the happy emancipation of the mature self, who is left to cut and paste reality as he desires. Cohen, *To Dream Again*, 23.

³¹² Television is not the information found on it is trivial but television is "the paradigm for our conception of public information" ... "television has achieved the power to define the form in which news must come, and it has also defined how we shall respond to it." In presenting news to us packaged as vaudeville, television induces other media to do the same, so that the total information environment begins to mirror television." ... USA Today, "is modeled precisely on the format of television. It is sold on the street in receptacles that look like television sets. Its stories are uncommonly short, its design leans heavily on pictures, charts and other graphics, some of them printed in various colors." At this point we are saturated with television and "we are now so thoroughly adjusted to the "NOW ... THIS" world of news – a world of fragments where events stand alone, stripped of any connection to the past, or to the future, or to other events – that all assumptions of coherence have vanished. And so, perforce, has contradiction etc. Postman, *Amusing Ourselves*, 110-111.

following examples may suffice. A reporter covers a live story of a town caught in the path of a canyon fire whereby many individuals have lost their lives and possessions with the potential to annihilate the township. The station cuts quickly to an Eveready Bunny commercial followed by a beer commercial that satisfies the greatest thirst. This is typical television where one finds a loss of reality between pain and a cool drink and where tragedy is irrelevant to the reality which we seek. According to the late Rod Serling,

“It is difficult to produce a television documentary that is both incisive and probing when every twelve minutes one is interrupted by twelve dancing rabbits singing about toilet paper.”³¹³

It is little wonder that at a football game a fractured minded spectator fan is amazed with an electric moment, the viciousness of the sport, and claps as an injured player is removed from the field bidding the game to go on often without a second thought about the injured. They have learned to discard the image of pain and await another scene in the narrative of life.

It would seem if fragmentation feeds diversity it would hinder Rorty's pragmatic scheme for solidarity. But Rorty is not necessarily concerned with diversity either. He considers this as an indication of pragmatism's role in society to advance diversity beyond transcendent extremes of morality and ethics while being committed to solidarity of purpose. Rorty would agree that television is a change-worthy device at the Ironist disposal in a technologic age, in a sense, imaginarily sending ultrasonic sound waves into the frozen tundra of our cultural mindset wherein the image of modernity will be shattered or are we as society simply being too melodramatic or

³¹³ Michal Moncur (Cynical) Quotations, Quotation #372 – Rod Sterling, [Database online] from; <http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/372.html>

seemingly addicted to the narrative of catastrophe.³¹⁴ Nonetheless the church is called to stand in the pathway of advancing wickedness and must testify as nonconformist to a dark society.

We can agree with Rorty that technology is affecting the mindset of America but to what extent are we as American's being affectively (moods, feelings, and attitudes) changed.

THE CATESTROPHIC EFFECT OF HOLLYWOOD'S NIHILISM

One might assume an excuse for laughing at a macabre scene on television is explained in the following ways: "it's only television" or "it's just a movie." Such excuses are minimally correct given the medium's purpose for existence, but it is televised entertainment with a technological twist that must be recognized.³¹⁵ Oddly enough one probably would not find the same reaction to the film expressed in its narrative form, given that words capture our attention to detail and touching the soul rather than being distracted by the imagery, music, and fast moving drama that often fragments one's ability to be or rationally react to the true horror of the written word.

Physicist Isaac Newton stated (the third law of motion) that every action produces an equal and opposite reaction. In this case, television imagery and methodology are

³¹⁴ Food for Thought: Could it be that that we are being simply overwrought with the idea of tragedy enveloping our country being broadcast by our entertainment culture video games, disaster movies, and concept thrillers having been long been sustained by American eschatological anxiety. American's seem to be caught up with the mindset that we are heading for societal destruction or Armageddon from our youth we are taught to fear the end of America itself, the destruction by malign forces of all that is held true. At one time these forces came from outer space, later, from behind the Iron Curtain. Today, fear arises from radical Islam threatening to envelop the world in a holy war of Jihad.

³¹⁵ [The television is] an invention that permits you to be entertained in your living room by people you wouldn't have in your home. – David Frost.

active ingredients upon the mind, and the mental apprehension or behavior is the reaction.

The Influence of television

Time spent with things like television, movies, computers/games, etc. must be observable in a reciprocal manner of binding mind and imagery into a collective whole. The following may suffice as a proper explanation that the television culture in its nihilistic bent dulls the proclivities of humanity.

We begin with issues facing American youth's given sixty four percent of this world's population is under age twenty four.

It is expressed by Hollywood moguls that films are produced in order to attract the eighteen year old and it is assumed that if Hollywood attracts the following of a male the film will become a blockbuster hit because the critical influence those individuals have on culture. Teenage girls will go to see a movie that their boyfriends want them to see, but the reverse does not hold.³¹⁶

There are some educators who have expressed their concern for the youth of America describing them as languid, empty, and adrift.

They can be anything they want to be ... but they have no particular reason to want to be anything in particular ... why are we surprised that such unfurnished persons should be preoccupied principally with themselves and with finding means to avoid permanent free fall? ... These are moral drifters having no responsibilities, no hope, and no purpose ... They are free from all commitments and try not to concern themselves with the perilous questions of life and death ... The drifter is a stranger, a tourist, and an indifferent observer.³¹⁷

This is the television watcher, the apathetic consumer, the college student who stares blankly for four years from the back of the classroom, waiting for real life to

³¹⁶ Zacharias, An Ancient Message: to the Postmodern. From; <http://www.org/resources/-jttran.php?seuid=54>

³¹⁷ Bloom, Closing of the American Mind, 336-382.

begin. They simply look for personal adventure and laugh when told they are individuals who will be world changers. The drifter responds to life as a game, joke, or ironic play. If the drifter is not entirely humorless, the sadness of the drifter is softened by easy pleasures, repacked humor, and childish naughtiness. The individual sits for hours in front of the television, remote in hand, flipping from station to station, sitcom to sitcom, with nothing in particular to watch and nothing in particular to do. They are not horribly sad, but bound by nothing and have not enough to do anything about it, since they really have no idea what they ought to do.³¹⁸

Virtual classrooms are on the rise, especially for students who have invested their lives in sports or better “on the go athletes” who like PC education for its flexibility and the edge it gives them over other student athletes who are pressured by the daily routine of attending classes. They also state it better prepares them for living independently as a college student. Although PC education has emerged as an increasingly popular educational alternative the verdict is not in what the effects of such practice will produce, and educators are split on the significance of such schools. On the one hand educators are encouraged given the programs and accreditation available. Others are less than apathetic for PC education which removes the personal influence of an instructor who has the potential to inspire the character and course of a student’s life.³¹⁹

³¹⁸ Neil Postman, *Virtual Students*, Digital Classroom: Televisions god, (The Nation, October 9, 2005).

³¹⁹ “Tennis hopeful Jamie Hunt, 16, felt he could not become a world-class junior player while attending a regular school. The international circuit has players on the road 50% of the time — and it's hard to focus on your backhand when you're worrying about being on time for homeroom” ... A year ago, Hunt's world junior ranking was 886; now it's 108. Deborah

Some may be correct that there has not been enough time to evaluate the effects of PC education. Yet the computer itself has had a dramatic impact upon the mind of America. Some state that there is something “sinister and infectious” about the computer as though we have caught a virus from it. We begin to take on particular qualities as though our minds are “rebootable,” “rewritable” hard drives that have possess “memory” and can reach a state of information overload. Furthermore computer technology has begun to convince individuals of what Rorty acknowledges, that we are not unique immortal souls but simply hard drives compiling information to be of use in our evolutionary journey or are we living in an imaginary world.³²⁰

There is no reason to argue against using television or computers in school or at home but it is necessary that we do not have an attitude of sleepwalking around important issues. We must not depend upon technology to save humanity from itself nor should technology replace the educator in a society of cultural information overload. Rorty fears a frozen-over culture cannot advance and Christians cannot

Fowler, *Virtual Schools for Jocks: More high school athletes are taking online classes. Does electronic ed. work?* (Time Magazine Archive, November 29, 2004).

³²⁰ There's something profoundly sinister and infectious about the idea, and it's a virus we caught from our computers. We spend all day working in a ghost world of digital data, computerized information that's manipulable, rewritable, copyable, rebootable, and erasable. Then we go home to a computer full of MP3s and a TiVo full of reruns. *Eternal Sunshine* plays on the creeping suspicion that our memories might work the same way — that deep down we're not unique immortal souls but swirls of fungible data points on a rewritable hard drive. If all we know of reality, of ourselves, is information, and information is infinitely malleable, how can we be sure it hasn't been corrupted? What if we all have amnesia, and we've just forgotten that we have it? Joel is a new kind of hero: he's not struggling with somebody else or with himself. He's fighting for the idea that there's a "he" to fight in the first place, and in the end it's not at all clear that he wins. Is this existential certainty? Lev Grossman, *Amnesia the Beautiful: Why is Hollywood so Obsessed with Forgetfulness? It's the National Delusion*, Time, 29 March 2004, 88.

afford to fall asleep at the wheel of limitless technology that promises a happier life without looking at the signs ahead.³²¹

This point is expressed for the purpose that “Life needs to be held together at the center if we are to reach to distant horizons.” Our culture owns neither a story nor holds at the center revealing a nihilism that has disposed of hope and fragmented the purpose of truth as an anchor of being.³²²

Television is a powerful communicative tool having much to do with costing America her Mind, that is, the ability to inwardly rationalize responsible situations, to feel despair or conviction, or to make proper choices in programming that is suitable for self investment. Television has become a device used to escape the pressures of life, a therapeutic opiate to enhance solidarity, and an antidote to deconstruct transcendent notions and metaphysical reasoning. But while television is a powerful medium of influence it cannot elevate itself beyond its parent technology.

The Technological Quest

The modern age has brought us great accomplishments: wealth, comfort, scientific discovery. It has empowered humanity to gain information vital for control over our physical and abstract worlds. Humanity in its quest to overcome information scarcity added important inventions to dispel such problems from arising again. Thus through technology humanity has supplied communicative devices for gathering and storing information that has staggered our imagination: computer banks, television

³²¹ One may remember when television and computers began to appear on the horizon many feared they had the potential to reason for us, to make libraries historical relics of the past, and to eliminate jobs. Let us not lose sight of dangers ahead and be willing to have hindsight to the past.

³²² Zacharias, *Ancient Message, To the Postmodern*.

cables, and satellites, to storage devices such as video, audiotape, film, silicon chips and diskettes. Technology has allowed our world to become smaller, perhaps more complex, but as Rorty would agree, it has taken important steps to breaking the language barrier and evolve towards a greater solidarity of purpose.

We may applaud ourselves for the achievements we have made, but while solving the communication problem we have created another challenge - information surplus, incoherence, and meaninglessness. Technology has brought to our world the ability to gain information from all over the globe, but have we become careless with our technological achievement having transformed information into a form of garbage, and ourselves into garbage collectors.

Technology, postmodernists and Rorty fail to supply humanity with an answer to our surplus of information. Information becomes garbage if we have no transcendent, should I say narrative, to interpret the information we gain. It is no wonder Rorty refers to culture, history, and language among other means as tool boxes whereby one may delve into when our purpose of life seems to go adrift. We need only to open another box of information packaged ready for use.

The Technological Delusion

The bond between information and or technology and human purpose has been disengaged from reality having nothing to weave into the fabric of its life, no instruction book for moral guidance, social purpose, and intellectual economy. “No stories to tell us what we need to know, and especially what we do not need to know.” Although information is available today at a push of a button and comes “indiscriminately, in enormous volume, at high speeds, disconnected from meaning

and import.” We must realize that no matter how large the size of input humanity gains if it does not solve the serious problems of life, it is useless material that only speculation can provide. Once again this is the garbage which Rorty relies upon to build his nihilistic pragmatically run utopian world. Rorty speaks of making mistakes for the sake of directing humanity toward the ultimate good, yet how can he claim there is an ultimate good when he has no absolute standard for good other than what purpose satisfies the greatest longings of humanity? How is it that all the information we have stored up has yet to solve the greatest of human dilemmas?

Without such narratives, we discover that information does not touch any of the important problems of life. If there are children starving in Somalia, or any other place, it has nothing to do with inadequate information. If our oceans are polluted and the rain forests depleted, it has nothing to do with inadequate information. If crime is rampant on our streets, if children are mistreated, it has nothing to do with inadequate information. Indeed, if we cannot get along with our own relatives, this, too, has nothing to do with inadequate information.³²³

Advancement is a part of human nature, but there is a danger when the term technology (although having no form of its own) takes upon itself an image of sacredness and transforms humanity’s belief that technological evolution is humanity’s savior when caught in the misconception that suffering and pain are a result of inadequate information.

Rorty and others who characteristically fit the mold of following informational technology have been duped into believing in a god offering little more than empty

³²³ What we are facing, then, is a series of interconnected delusions, beginning with the belief that technological innovation is the same thing as human progress--which is lifted to the delusion that our sufferings and failures are caused by inadequate information--which is linked, in turn, to the most serious delusion of all: that it is possible to live without a loom to weave our lives into fabric, that is to say, without a transcendent narrative Neil Postman, *Science and the Story that We Need*, First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life, January 1997, 29 [Journal Online]; Available from Questa Media America, Inc.

hope and fraudulent trust where Rorty declares the “meaning of life is the creation of new vocabularies.”

Imagine if Hitler were to live to share his personal narrative, quest for autonomy, and hope to reshape German destiny as a utopian empire. What would he have said concerning his beliefs in technology and his decision to rid the world of the narratives of all other gods than his own by burning them at the stake? How may he have responded to the twelve short years and countless lives spent in establishing his cause? Hitler’s god had failed him, his country, and his world.

It is odd that Rorty, being an advocate of history fails to recognize one of Hitler’s fatal flaws within his own life, that is, seeking to annihilate all other gods except his own and having become a victim of technological impress is duped by the same hope and faith that others have fallen prey. Nevertheless Rorty relies upon a ready formulated premise that the great social hope which permeates the democratic societies – the hope for a cooperative global utopia, in which education and technology conspire to make a peaceful life of useful “non-backbreaking,” work available to everyone.³²⁴

Although Rorty believes in cooperative global consensus which reaches the heights of rational tolerance via science and technology, he seems biased about what others may offer as alternative desires:

³²⁴ Rorty has written of 'the great social hope which permeates the democratic societies —the hope for a co-operative global utopia, in which education and technology conspire to make a peaceful life of useful, non-backbreaking, work available to everyone' ("In a Flattened World", London Review, of Books, 8 April 1993 , p. 3). The shift from the plural ('democratic societies') to the singular ('a global utopia') is revealing. It seems to indicate a desire to transcend the world of 'societies' (or nations), but there is no political strategy for undermining the plurality of societies. Instead, these are accepted as the context in which the hope for a co-operative utopia is formulated and in which, by implication, it is to be lived. Michael Billig, *Nationalism and Richard Rorty: the Text as a Flag for Pax Americana*, New Left Reviewa.202 (1993): 3, 78, <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=98682748>.

It is “self-evident” that those who “arm themselves with technical means for gratification of their desires will also automatically adopt the right desires” that is, those in accordance with reason will exhibit tolerance toward those with alternative desires because it will be understood how and why these undesirable desires were acquired. The only place to acquire these right desires is the place where most of the technology comes from – the West from which ones “moral ideas and one’s social virtues flow.”³²⁵

Thus Rorty’s unwillingness to discern the subtle dangers of technological nihilism and his belief in science as a means to faith, hope, and power have directed him to believe his dogma offers humanity a better sense of reality by providing characteristically “free and open discussion,” and a “civil society.”³²⁶ He believes the time has come to blend societies into a “singular global utopia.”³²⁷ But Rorty’s relativistic vacillation that his faith in technology as a socially unifying force is

³²⁵ Rortyan rationality follows his sense of tribal solidarity. He basis his assumption that the West claims a better technological information than other countries and identifies three types of rationality (1) “Technical Reasoning” or sometimes “skill at survival.” That it is granted (Rorty gives no explanation for such circumstances) by humans armed with modern technology having more than those not so armed possess the ability to adjust to environmental circumstances and stimuli more delicately than other less inclined and who may demonstrate brute force and shallow reasoning. (2) Rationality is the name for an extra added ingredient that human beings have and brutes do not. This ingredient is the ability to honor one’s conscience and instinct by the ability to set goals above mere survival, example: “it may tell you that it would be better to be dead than to do certain things” and establishes an evaluative hierarchy over adjustments having no purpose. Note: It is difficult to rationalize what Rorty is referring to given his ideas on hierarchy. (3) Rationality is roughly synonymous with tolerance. Rortyan rationality, i.e. tolerance is the ability not to be overly disturbed by differences from ones self, nor responding aggressively to such differences. This ability goes along with a willingness to alter one’s own habits, i.e. self creationism affords us the ability to retain or remove habits in order for communities to coexist peacefully, and to compromise ways of life. Tolerance also gives us freedom to dialogue, use persuasion over brutality and assumes Hegelian assumption that rationality is quasi synonymous with freedom. Thus Rortyan Hegelianism insists rational freedom simply an impression of freedom, that is, whatever true freedom is. Richard Rorty, *A Pragmatist View of Rationality and Cultural Difference Journal*, Philosophy East & West 42 (1992): 581-596.

³²⁶ Randal Peerenboom, *The Limits of Irony: Rorty and the China Challenge*, Philosophy East & West 1 (2000): 58.

³²⁷ Billing, *Nationalism*, 78.

questionable as he wavers in his conviction stating: “at least technology will help “serve our material needs.”³²⁸

The danger technology provides humanity is not necessarily knowledge or the ability to use it, but when, why, and how humanity utilizes it if at all. We have the idea if we possess certain technology it should be used, not wasted. At this point technology begins to encroach on moral and ethical principles casting a shadow upon the metaphysical, and hence humanity trust’s in their ability without standards to guide ethical choice.

The dilemma of humanity is the inability to use reason, invention, and choice without allowing those choices to use us. When the soul is neglected the whole being is lost to its own purposes, plans, and desires. The will becomes gnarled, the soul weakened, and spirit tarnished while living a hopeless existence in a narrative written by flesh.

Can we accommodate just anything without spoiling everything? Can we believe any idea without belittling every idea? Can we enjoy love without respect for its demands? Can we claim coherence when we live with contradiction? Can we nurture the soul when we feed only the flesh?³²⁹

It is important that technological America cultivate a sense of care not to concede to our technologies more dominion than their particular functions warrant, and to enter into a type of technological atheism, meaning we must disbelieve in the American deity of technology.

³²⁸ Peerenboom, *Limits of Irony*, 58.

³²⁹ Zacharias, Deliver us from Evil, 101.

American pragmatism is vulnerable to dominion technologicism given the pragmatic mood is to follow whatever works for the betterment of the whole and places no limits upon the system of beliefs that form it.

Thus technology can be assessed in two ways: as machinery or another system of beliefs that formulate the thought world of technology since the primary goal of human thought is efficiency and computation is the sum total of human judgment, all of which Rorty would respect as superior intellect, that is, what cannot be measured does not exist, and that the affairs of citizens are best guided and conducted by technical experts.

In the sense that people believe technology works, that they rely on it, that it makes promises, that they are bereft when denied access to it, that they are delighted when they are in its presence, that for most people it works in mysterious ways, that they condemn people who speak against it, that they stand in awe of it and that, in the "born again" mode, they will alter their lifestyles, their schedules, their habits and their relationships to accommodate it. If this be not a form of religious belief, what is? ³³⁰

Rorty offers pragmatism based coherence theory justifying his claim that humanity may use anything at their disposal to define life and relieve pain and suffering. Yet Rorty has yet to write his personal narrative describing how pragmatism and technology have made his life joyful and death meaningful. He offers humanity a shallow hope in science and information technology to bridge the gap between people

³³⁰ Postman, *Virtual Students*, 1. Furthermore there are few social institutions that have not been willing to accommodate such a system of thought themselves – even in some cases, eliminate themselves --to accommodate such a system of thought. Our politics, education, family life, judiciary, and even churches have been adjusted, redesigned, and redirected to fit the needs of this new religion. The prevailing theology requires that we focus all of our intelligence on the question of what technology can do, almost none of what it may undo. *Neil Postman, Deus Machina, Technos: Quarterly for Education and Technology*, Spring 2001, 27 [database on-line]; available from Questia, <http://www.questa.com/PMqst?a=o&d=50023957-59>

groups with a rationale that trades freedom for a quasi image of self habitual constructions born to run ever upon a tread mill of hope without realizing that the human image is inwardly flawed without a transcendent savior.

Technology - A Quasi-God

The great god of technology towers above its parent science offering a clearer glimpse of paradise. While the god of science seems balanced offering understanding and power, technology speaks only of power and competes for Christianity's right to the universe by mirroring Christian concepts of advice, competency, and benefits to all who follow the Way from the poor to the rich. Furthermore technology demands its believers to abide by the first commandant: "Thou shall have no other gods before me," meaning its followers must "shape their needs and aspirations to the possibilities of technology." Technology offers little more false hope and bondage to an idea:

It is a god that speaks to us of power, not limits, speaks to us of ownership, not stewardship, speaks to us only of rights, not responsibilities, speaks to us self-aggrandizement, not humility.³³¹

If one were to speak skeptically against the god of technology, as such and most immediately, one will sustain a rebuke from defenders of the faith since humanity's genius is derived to that end. They may say "it is the way of technology" or they may respond "this is our destiny to replace ourselves with machines," meaning technological ingenuity and human progress is one and the same," hardly a virtue of

³³¹ What we are facing, then, is a series of interconnected delusions, beginning with the belief that technological innovation is the same thing as human progress--which is lifted to the delusion that our sufferings and failures are caused by inadequate information--which is linked, in turn, to the most serious delusion of all: that it is possible to live without a loom to weave our lives into fabric, that is to say, without a transcendent narrative. Postman, *Science and the Story that We Need*, 29 ff.

humility. Is it possible that a true indication of human progress is to be condemned as a reactionary, hardly tolerant of the status quo, a renegade wishing to dialogue outside the loop of progressive technologists who have placed humanity on the slab of materialism rather than to define deeper needs than those of philosophic therapists who cannot reason beyond the surface of individual pain and suffering, nor wish to examine a necessary responsibility for transcendent wisdom, mercy, and hope.³³²

We have shared the necessity to be knowledgeable of the god of technology and its capacity to enslave the human mind. Hollywood's philosophy of fragmentation and Nihilism's attack on moral convictions all of which are part of the Rortyan world view whereby science, history, and technology become instruments in forming societal standards literally turning culture into an experimental think-tank. Relativistic nihilism and pragmatic subjectivism attend to irresponsibility whereby transcendence is clouded by individual constructs of self developmental inclinations of reality, i.e. what we know express, and feel is worthy of truth. Thus society is born anew by the watchful eye of the technologist, socialized by the philosophical therapist, and verified by the Hollywood school of the arts via television etc.

³³² Why is this so? In a traditional theocracy the answer is, "We do what we do because it is the way of God. It is His will, and we must obey." American culture gives a strikingly similar answer: "It is the way of technology. It is its will, and we must obey." Of course, people obey their gods because they believe it is good for them to do so, and there is no denying that the uses of technological thinking and its products have brought unimagined benefits to many people. But to the extent that the benefits have been accompanied by an unquestioned ambition to acquire godlike powers over nature, by the assumption that technological innovation is synonymous with human progress, and by the demonstrably false proposition that technological thinking offers the best solution to our most profound human problems, we make ourselves into childish fanatics, pursuing false hopes and an Impotent idol. Postman, *Deus Machinia*, 27.

The question remains how we may answer Hollywood's style nihilism in our personal lives as well as its characteristic despair in America.

Answering Hollywood

One way to become informed and to inform others of Hollywood's moral trends and to protest these trends is to develop a group of viewers. It is said that there are just three "R" rated videos which have been best sellers buy the other 22 and critique them repeatedly and watch many of the classics before the "R" rating came into effect in 1968, because 60% of the films made afterwards were "R" or worse.

While it may be a challenge teach your children that masterpieces teach you something new about yourself every time you see them watch them again taking time to dialogue concerning the theme of the film. Show them how newer releases stifle the imagination or leave out essential values that we should mirror. And for older children one may wish to watch films pertaining to wars of American history and guide them to realize that war is about freedom.

One may wish to convert your church social hall into a mini-theater and to offer a weekly film festival. Look for the Dove Foundation's blue and white label on videos the Grand Rapids, Mich., organization rates as "family friendly," or work to establish a money-back guarantee at motion picture theaters. Most theaters honor a money back guarantee that an individual after 20 minutes is not satisfied may have a total refund of the purchase price of the ticket.

The greatest challenge of all is developing a personal sense of humility and awareness that personal attitudes such as arrogance are easily cultivated and commit

yourself to keep tabloids out of your life or magazines that offer nothing more than vanity.³³³

Answering Nihilism³³⁴

Nihilism is the declaration that life has no meaningful purpose, followed to its logical conclusion. Nietzsche believed nihilism was corrosive enough to destroy all moral, religious, and metaphysical convictions and precipitate the greatest crises in human history as a product of existential despair and extreme skepticism. If God is dead as Nietzsche believed everything is justifiable since it is impossible to establish a reasonable and coherent ethical theory without first establishing the telos, meaning the ultimate object or destiny of human life.

First nihilism is expressed as a kind of runaway humanism. It is part of the human nature to live continually in with a type of quasi-religious expectancy that demands we strive to create something out of nothing to live the Nietzschean dream to live life for the sake of living and to change for the simple act of changing and in our striving to fashion our world anew our lives begin to overlook the novel before the ever newer in an endless sense of our human limitlessness.

One of the most horrifying elements of such runaway humanism is hatred for the mundane and its power to annihilate, not only commonplace things such as pure air or

³³³ One may check out a number of internet sights that may be helpful. Here are to get started: Movie theology: Movie Reviews and Resources:

(1) <http://www.cmu.ca/library/faithfilm.html>

(2) Moves Made Easy Critique: <http://simplycinema.blogspot.com/index.html>

³³⁴ The nihilism referred to reflects upon two different castes formed during the late 20th century. The first form of "nihilist" is used to characterize the postmodern man, a dehumanized conformist, alienated, indifferent, and baffled, directing psychological energy into hedonistic narcissisms or into a deep resentment that often explodes in violence. This perspective is derived from the existentialists' reflections on nihilism stripped of any hopeful expectations, leaving only the experience of sickness, decay, and disintegration.

fresh water but everything in its path is to be forgotten or reinterpreted from its original form and meaning from novels to history books, from heroes and heroines to the twisted remnants of their lives.

Rorty agrees with Nietzsche that there is no objective order or structure in the world except what we give it. Thus the nihilist discerns that all values are unjustifiable and reason impotent since there is necessarily no true world. They also agree that nihilism requires a radical repudiation of all imposed values and meanings as one puts the shoulder to the plow one destroys (Will to Power). But unlike Nietzsche who believed nihilism must run its course (that is, if humanity survives the process),³³⁵ Rorty on the other hand insists that future society will be an accomplished nihilism whereby stable structures of being are weakened and where violence does not necessarily accompany this process.

But from what can be deduced from Rorty offers little comfort that ceremonial societies were crueler than modern society because modern society knows better. He assumes humanity has somehow matured to resist violence does not bear witness with nihilism's chaotic past nor can Rorty speculate upon a utopian theory that proliferates strategies for creating representational deference to violence.

³³⁵ It has been over a century now since Nietzsche explored nihilism and its implications for civilization. As he predicted, nihilism's impact on the culture and values of the 20th century has been pervasive, its apocalyptic tenor spawning a mood of gloom and a good deal of anxiety, anger, and terror. Interestingly, Nietzsche himself, a radical skeptic preoccupied with language, knowledge, and truth, anticipated many of the themes of postmodernity. It's helpful to note, then, that he believed we could--at a terrible price--eventually work through nihilism. If we survived the process of destroying all interpretations of the world, we could then perhaps discover the correct course for humanity ... I praise, I do not reproach, [nihilism's] arrival. I believe it is one of the greatest crises, a moment of the deepest self-reflection of humanity. Whether man recovers from it, whether he becomes master of this crisis, is a question of his strength. Alan Pratt, *Nihilism*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/n/nihilism.htm>

The question remains. Can a civilization which repudiates values and Being in the universe survive and if so is nihilism via consensus a proper construct for utopia?

Centuries after Jesus, we have become the impoverished inheritors of a culture that understands neither law nor grace, where absolutes are debunked as the gasp of an antiquated thought pattern, and forgiveness is branded a beggar's refuge. It is not at all surprising that in Toynbee's study of history we are the first of 21 civilizations to attempt "civility" without a moral point of reference. To compound this further, we have come to these conclusions through a process that only causes us to sink deeper into the abyss of nihilism, where life has lost all meaning.³³⁶

Rorty does not believe nihilism will lead to violence or tragedy before it reaches its accomplished task given cultural maturity and popular consensus as an obvious measure of truth. However, we may assume no one can speculate what accomplished nihilism will look like without morals and values in a quasi-controlled world of chaotic freedom without consequences. Yet there is plausible evidence that civilization has begun to respond to Hollywood nihilism as despair is measured by trivializing tragedy with futile laughter from sitcoms to standup comedians.

It is stated that Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, the Littleton, Colorado Killers, "whooped and hollered like it was a game" (in the words of the survivors) as they acted out the "Gothic" roles glamorized by popular culture and murdered twelve of their classmates. This is the same nation that mourns over the mayhem at Littleton chuckles at pop nihilism coming out of Hollywood – but sees no contradiction.³³⁷

³³⁶ Ravi Zacharias, *Biblical Authority and Cultural Relativism: Just Thinking*, 1993.

³³⁷ Postmodernists, for their part, celebrate the splintering of morality as the happy emancipation of the mature self, who is left to cut and paste reality as he desires. "Postmodern ironists," says Richard Rorty, are "never quite able to take themselves seriously" because they are "always aware that the terms in which they describe themselves are subject to change, always aware of the contingency and fragility of their final vocabularies, and thus themselves." Many postmodernists celebrate the Internet as the structural underpinning of the postmodern

As we address narratives of our time we must be certain of the narrative itself. Again there can be only one true narrative that sets the standard for all others. In the words of Dante who was convinced that true realistic narrative was the force that moved the sun and all other stars reveals God's perfect narrative of his relationship with humankind. With this realism in mind we must consider the statement "living in a post Christian era" is a misnomer if Christ is the true narrative then how can any age be deemed post-Christian. It is better said the world is not post-Christian but "proto-Christian" and the narrative of which Christians speak of is realistic and trustworthy.

Thus the battle is the Lord's and his bride must not withdraw from the marketplace of religion either publicly or politically. She must realize the church has an absolute story to tell. If Rorty or the postmodernists wish to deconstruct every imaginable narrative inhabiting the thoughts of humanity they will find the True Narrative living within a community that bears the story of the world and is in need to exemplifying the story so that the world may for the first time, know itself. The church must manifest what in fact she is, the story of the world:

The Church and the Eucharist are the story of the world, the axis monde, the center of all that is, the recapitulation of all that ever has been, the anticipation of the promised Feast of the Lamb.³³⁸

The Christian cannot agree with Rorty that changing language for the need of the present is rational, nor can they agree that history is simply a linguistic construct stored, as a box, for reference purposes and periodically opened to reassess the

world, since it allows individuals to adopt multiple personae, switch genders, and indulge whatever fantasies they wish. Eric S. Cohen, *To Wonder Again*, First Things, Journal of Religion and Public Life (May 2000): 23.

³³⁸ Richard John Neuhaus, *C. S. Lewis in the Public Square*, First Things (December 1998): 30.

direction of our humanness and to provide hope in the utopia to come. Christians on the other hand believe that history maps God's plan to bring humanity to saving faith and history will someday be a closed book on the lap of time past looking toward a timeless eternity.

It is important for Christians to know where they stand presently with a clear mind centered on Christ in the moment that is to abide, not to risk the hour on thoughts of tomorrow or chance having one's life miss the mark of sharing imaginatively or otherwise the Greatest of Stories. History is born in the moment and narratives of God's grace are made every day.

We must embrace the time in which we live asking serious questions, such as what belief systems occupies the minds of Americans to risk societal evolution upon assumption rather than truth. A system that destroys the moral fabric of a nation once called to be a light on a hill to bury Truth and to raise an ensign to all sorts of chaos to establish a utopian global village pointing to perhaps the end of history. How is this true?

Nietzsche fills a prophetic role in the demise of the West as Rorty plays out the drama of a post-Nietzschean world displayed almost in a most fictitious way. But in reality it genuinely exposes all foundational beliefs and the most venerated truths as symptoms of a defective Western mythological lie.

Nietzschean themes of epistemological failure, value destruction, and cosmic purposelessness have preoccupied artists, social critics, and philosophers³³⁹ convinced

³³⁹ Note Since Nietzsche's compelling critiques individuals such as Spengler concluded that Nietzsche was correct and was convinced by studying the collapse of several civilizations that nihilism weakened religious, artistic, and political traditions and finally toppled by the

that Nietzsche was well reasoning and that his program would be executed with great destructive force, total assault on reality, and nothing less than the greatest crisis of humanity. Nietzsche writes:

What I relate is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: the advent of nihilism ... For some time now our whole European culture has been moving as toward a catastrophe, with a tortured tension that is growing from decade to decade: restlessly, violently, headlong, like a river that wants to reach the end.³⁴⁰

What is happening? American is being secularized under the banner of pragmatic nihilism sold under the icon of technology. The Christian faith is jeopardized being continually saturated by a capitalistic economy and some are duped we can set our own standards of morality and rid ourselves intellectually of any responsibility toward defending sacred Truths.

The Church stands upon a battlefield of honor and truth defending against the assault of wickedness. But if the battle field becomes level having no vantage point,

insidious workings of several distinct nihilistic postures: the Faustian nihilist "shatters the ideals"; the Apollonian nihilist "watches them crumble before his eyes"; and the Indian nihilist "withdraws from their presence into himself." Withdrawal, for instance, often identified with the negation of reality and resignation advocated by Eastern religions, is in the West associated with various versions of Epicureanism and stoicism. Spengler concludes that Western civilization is already in the advanced stages of decay with all three forms of nihilism working to undermine epistemological authority and ontological grounding. Martin Heidegger, observed nihilism in various and hidden forms was already "the normal state of man" (The Question of Being). Other philosophers' predictions about nihilism's impact have been dire. Outlining the symptoms of nihilism in the 20th century, Helmut Thielicke wrote that "Nihilism literally has only one truth to declare, namely, that ultimately Nothingness prevails and the world is meaningless" (Nihilism: Its Origin and Nature, with a Christian Answer, 1969). From the nihilist's perspective, one can conclude that life is completely amoral, a conclusion, Thielicke believes, that motivates such monstrosities as the Nazi reign of terror. Gloomy predictions of nihilism's impact are also charted in Eugene Rose's Nihilism: The Root of the Revolution of the Modern Age (1994). If nihilism proves victorious--and it's well on its way, he argues--our world will become "a cold, inhuman world" where "nothingness, incoherence, and absurdity" will triumph. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/n/nihi-lims.htm>

³⁴⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, Trans. W. Kaufmann, Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1956, 109-110.

the Christian story becomes stagnated by the philosophies of this world and nihilism gains an upper hand coming close to what Rorty calls “irony.”

Has the end of history come upon us when society becomes ensnared by its own devices of self helps, creature comforts, and information technology that compel the masses to become part of the philosophical consensus and coherent dream of a human made utopia? Perhaps the world no longer needs look for the metaphysical as Rorty stated that we no longer need search for the abstract the metaphysical and the transcendent one to offer a ready made salvation or has human ingenuity clouded the mind nearing the pinnacle of technology has reached the end of history.

Modern societies are the best-equipped in history at satisfying man's immediate desires: food is fast and plentiful; shelter is comfortable and extravagant; gadgets and devices simplify our lives; the Internet puts a worldwide market at our fingertips; modern medicine prolongs life, eases suffering, and even dulls, at least temporarily, psychological despair; birth control all but guarantees sex without responsibility; and television supplies endless varieties of ready-made entertainment. Modern man is safe (except in certain parts of certain cities or when madmen strike in unsuspecting places), mobile, and autonomous; and his civilization is the most democratic, the most advanced, and the most prosperous in human history--leading some scholars to ponder whether humanity has reached "the end of history." ³⁴¹

It is important that faith is sustained by an abiding relationship in Christ where we are challenged to discourse with the world having lost its story while maintaining the capacity for critical thought in the public square politically or socially. C. S. Lewis was convinced that human beings are “hard-wired” for reason in search for truth and as we encourage our world to share their story, which in reality is God’s mode of speaking to His creatures, the Greatest of all Stories - the story of salvation.³⁴² Here we are

³⁴¹ Cohen, To Wonder Again, 1.

³⁴² Note: C. S. Lewis foresaw some of the concerns addressed here. Somewhere he says that imagination is the organ of meaning, and reason is the organ of truth.

encouraged to tell our story patiently and imaginatively engaging in dialogue to attract the unbelieving in a winsome way.

Thus the Church must become increasingly observable, remaining in the fray by undertaking the task she does best defending the truth, telling better stories (winsome), and confidently reintroducing the Great Story in place of the self-described “madness” of the postmodernists who have domesticated Nietzsche on the comforts of the faculty lounge may themselves be dismissed as being simply ironic.

CHAPTER TWO

UTOPIA – A FIELD OF DREAMS

In the name of peace and Pragmatism, let us face with open eyes a pluralistic world in which there are no universal churches, no single remedy for all disease, no one way to teach or write or sing, no magic diet that will make everyone healthy and happy, no world poets and no chosen races cut to one pattern or virtue, but only the wretched and wonderfully diversified human race which can live and build and leave cultural traces of its passage in a world that was apparently not fashioned for the purpose.¹

Rortyan reformed pragmatism is unique in its usage of philosophic hermeneutics as a means to the bridge gap between the academy and social and, cultural settings, which include a variety of socio-political scenarios, ideas, customs, and social behavior. More interesting is Rorty's quest to establish a utopia where his concepts are tested and proved for the betterment of humanity even though when speaking of utopia Rorty generally limits himself to Western Democracy. It would seem the Rortyan Utopian system will replace the missing link that binds all humanity together

UTOPIA

The meaning of the term "utopia" is difficult to unravel. Utopia may be described as a standard for political hope, socialistic equilibrium, or a necessary horizon to look beyond the unacceptable to a reign of peace. The nineteenth century can be depicted as a blueprint for a planned new society driven by its faith in technology to rescue humanity from the ills of this world. Or it may apply to faith for the escape from (or overthrow of) technology to return to previous forms of social organization.

¹ Francis Shoemaker, *Aesthetic Experience and the Humanities: Modern Ideas of Aesthetic Experience in the Reading of World Literature* [book on-line] (New York, Columbia University Press, 1943), 124; available from Questa.

Thus when we consider the question of utopia it is impossible to critique, as it consists of many theoretical twists and turns seeking its own reality, generally its meaning carries the force of hope, peace, and happiness for all who are oppressed and humiliated by societal norms.

Rorty utopian views follow a common pathway seemingly carved out of borrowed historical territory, treacherous philosophical landscape, and filled with endless assumptions out of which Rorty emerges with a plan for the eradication of cruelty and the establishment of solidarity. As the author and proclaimed apostle of the new pragmatism Rorty encourages his followers to remain hopeful when confronting the intolerant *strangers* – hordes critical of common sense-nationalism and gospel of tolerance.

Rorty, the utopian dreamer writes with the vigor hoping that there will someday be a global utopia, a common cooperative solidarity coupling world societies into a single corporate unified state. Rorty dreams of a world state whereby education and technology will make life easier for all democratic societies but does not implement a strategy for doing so.²

² Rorty has written of ‘the great social hope which permeates the democratic societies — the hope for a co-operative global utopia, in which education and technology conspire to make a peaceful life of useful, non-backbreaking, work available to everyone’ (“In a Flattened World”, London Review, of Books, 8 April 1993 , p. 3). The shift from the plural ('democratic societies') to the singular ('a global utopia') is revealing. It seems to indicate a desire to transcend the world of 'societies' (or nations), but there is no political strategy for undermining the plurality of societies. Instead, these are accepted as the context in which the hope for a co-operative utopia is formulated and in which, by implication, it is to be lived. Michael Billig, Nationalism and Richard Rorty: *the Text as a Flag for Pax Americana*, New Left Review. 202 (1993): 78.

The Rortyan dream is one of narrative, solidarity, justice, and imagination. It is part of a general reform of traditional theory connecting history past with history present forming a common narrative of lifestyle. Rorty writes:

In my Utopia, human solidarity would be seen not as a fact to be recognized by clearing away prejudice, or borrowing down to previously hidden depths but ... a goal to be achieved ... by the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers. Solidarity is ... created ... by increasing our sensitivity to particular details of the pain and humiliation of other, unfamiliar sorts of people. Such increased sensitivity makes it more difficult to marginalize people different from ourselves ... “That is why the novel, the movie, and the TV program have, gradually but steadily, replaced the sermon and the treatise as the principal vehicles of moral change and progress.”³

My liberal utopia, this replacement would receive a kind of recognition which it still lacks ... recognition of a general turn against theory and toward narrative.”... A historicist and Nominalism culture of the sort I envisage would settle instead for narratives which connect the present with the past, on the one hand, and with utopian futures, on the other. More important, it would regard the realization of utopias, and the envisaging of still further utopias, alas an endless process - an endless, proliferating realization of Freedom, rather an a convergence toward an already existing Truth.⁴

LIVING ON THE EDGE

Richard Rorty provides his readers an historical glimpse of America backward from the year 2096 and narrates developments which America faces in her quest for solidarity.

His story is of a post-Christian and a post-Philosophical age in which we find Western democracy recovering from “Civil War” and “violent revolution” as a nation of “broken down” democracies, chaotic destruction of cities, and loss of trust in

³ Rorty, *CIS*, xv.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xiv.

government, and having burst into an economic collapse he defines as a “second depression.”

The American recovery proves to be one that is “long” and “hesitantly painful,” an America whose people are now appalled by past political vocabulary dominated by individual and civil rights, whose moral order was subject to personal responsibility and individual salvation, and whose economic order was subjected to the “regrettable necessity” of unequal distribution of wealth and income.⁵

Rorty speculates that in the “late twenty-first century” after the military had saved the country from utter chaos and insurgency in the ghettos during 2014 and how the “Democratic Vistas Party, coalition of trade unions, and churches toppled the military dictatorship in 2044.”

The Churches rediscover Social Gospel theology of the early twentieth century and the language of “fraternity”⁶ and therefore “social hope” was invoked⁷ and unselfishness replaces the need for personal rights or equality. Morality becomes neither a matter of applying the moral law nor as the acquisition of virtues but as fellow creatures “felling, the ability to sympathize” with the plight of others and where

⁵ Rorty, *PSH*, 243 - 251.

⁶ The meaning of “Fraternity,” says Rorty, like friendship, was not a concept that either philosophers or lawyers knew how to handle. They could formulate principles of justice, equality and liberty, and invoke these principles when weighing hard moral or legal issues. But how will we formulate a principle of fraternity? Fraternity is an inclination of the heart, one that produces a sense of shame at having much when others have little. It is not the sort of thing that anybody can have a theory about or that people can be argued into having. Ibid.

⁷ The traditional use of “brother and sister” in union locals and religious congregations is the principal reason why fraternity (or, among purists, ‘siblinghood’) is now the catchphrase of American politics. ‘Solidarity is forever’ and ‘This Land is Your Land’ are sung at least as often as ‘The Star-Spangled Banner.’” Ibid.

quotations from Scripture and literature dominate political theorists and social scientists.⁸

We are assuming that the key emphasis Rorty places upon utopia is fraternal solidarity where political and moral arguments do not revolve around who has the “right” but how may we refrain from the reemergence of “hereditary castes either racial or economic.” To prove his point Rorty borrows President Thomas Jefferson’s union slogan “An injury to one is an injury to all” as the catchphrase of his new America politic to rehabilitate an increasingly pessimistic and theoretical liberalism of which hopelessness has become fashionable.⁹

Necessity for Reform

One can sense Rorty’s candor, whether refreshing or distasteful, that the time is ripe for reform of an overstressed monolith called democracy. If we consider the findings of some historians and social analysts as truth worthy Christians need also sense the time is near for spiritual and political reform and to prepare themselves as missionary revolutionaries to a culture whose principle motive “is the belief that we can still make admirable sense of our lives even if we cease to have what Nagel calls ‘an ambition of transcendence.’”¹⁰

Rorty claims modernists were too extreme and took unnecessary and often violent steps to conquer injustices, while pragmatism offers smaller steps for the betterment of humanity. He is convinced that we have reached the pinnacle of our evolutionary

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Rorty, *AOC*, 37.

¹⁰ Rorty, *ORT*, 12.

progress that we no longer need the theoretical ladder to support us, and, that it needs be replaced by the experiential applications to life.

We have reached a time [says Rorty] at which we can finally get rid of the conviction common to Plato and Marx that there must be large theoretical ways of finding out how to end injustice, as opposed to small experimental ways.”¹¹

We must take seriously the following account of our country. There seems to be an ever increasing pressure on what George Orwell warns of totalitarian “Big Brother” government,¹² a coming end or a playing out of intellectual tradition which Rorty calls the “Cartesian-Lokean-Kantian tradition,” that is reshaping our understanding of the nature of our human situation, and the Anglo church which retains much of its cultural traditions without its ability to make the Gospel relevant to the increasing number of unchurched, and to a generation that has no remembrance of what church means.¹³

¹¹ Rorty urges the Left to adopt the poetic patriotism of Whitman and the pragmatic patriotism of Dewey--to love America enough to wish to change it for the better, not by attempting to make it into utopia, but rather to improve it in "small, experimental ways." Urging the Left to abandon its foray into "cultural politics," and rather to re-engage in "real politics" of reform in imitation of the left of Progressivism, Rorty seeks to move the Left from its flirtation with Germanic pessimism and rather renew its origins as "the party of hope." Rorty, *AOC*, 14, 228.

One may find interesting that in his 1989 work “Contingency, Solidarity, and Irony,” Rorty refrains from revolution (*CIS*, 60-61), but by the time he penned “Philosophy and Social Hope” ten years later he refers to contemporary America having passed through revolution. Perhaps by then he had agreed with Marx on two points: that technical innovations bring about new ways of meeting human needs and make it increasingly possible for people to satisfy their deepest wants and to develop and perfect their individual capacities, secondly he may have agreed with Marx’s claim to have proved that the long history of oppression would soon end when the masses rise up and usher in a revolution that will create a classless utopian society.

¹² George Orwell’s book *Nineteen Eighty-Four* paints a worrisome picture of “Big Brother” whose constant surveillance of life is fitted to a totalitarian administration baring truth, love, thought, and the impression of individuality, and controls its populace with fear, brute force, and propaganda. George Orwell, *George Orwell: An Age Like This*, 1920-1940, ed. Orwell, Sonia and Ian Angus, Vol. 1 [book on-line] (Boston, Mass.: David R. Godine, 2000), available from Questia, <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=87119503>.

¹³ This has stirred controversy among evangelicals. Some believers insist on holding to tradition at all costs expecting the lost to change their values if they are to worship

Pragmatism holds a necessary value for Rorty to develop a common fraternity among men and women. Pragmatism defends social experimentation as a means of improving society, accepts pluralism, and rejects dead dogmas. To others, pragmatism offer no final answer or absolutes and appears vague in its capacity to harmonize opposites, i.e. Platonic dualisms.

Nevertheless Rorty presses his point that in order to bring about national solidarity we do not clear away prejudice via reflection on discovery of the human nature as metaphysicians explain but, solidarity is achieved as a goal created by human endeavor. He agrees with Orwell that a common core drawing all of humanity together into fraternity is non-existent except for survival instincts which demand immediate response. There is no common built-in solidarity, says Rorty, other than an aesthetic orientation by which we may use as a moral compass.¹⁴ For Rorty being void of a common nature or moral compass amplifies our ability to feel others pain and humiliation. An increased sensitivity will hinder our ability to marginalize different or “strange people” other than ourselves.”¹⁵ We are thus transformed people assisting others as advocates of those having no voice.

alongside them. Such a hesitance to change has produced heated debate in churches that see declining membership as the fault of the lost (for not attending) rather than the church’s ability to adapt the Gospel presentation. Some state: “Critiquing it (the church) will not change that (the situation the church finds itself). It is like falling into a pool then critiquing the water. You can critique all you like, but you are still wet. The church finds itself in postmodern waters already. We had best learn to swim. We have become our own mission field, and evangelical leaders see the need for both traditional and contemporary methods of reaching American society. The clarion call is for there to be new approaches to discipleship, evangelism, worship and missions. Joel Lanier Woodstock, *Learn to Swim*, The Christian Index (February, 2006); available from <http://www.christianindex.org/1950.article>

¹⁴ Rorty, *CIS*, 177.

¹⁵ Rorty instructs American intellectuals (synonymous with the Left, “the part of hope”) to take the fight for social justice out of the ivory tower of academia and back into the streets

Rorty says the use of “the novel,” “the movie,” and “the TV Program” institute powerful influence for change, and by their steady advance have “replaced the sermon and the treatise as the principle vehicles of moral change and progress”. It is through these mediums says Rorty that his “liberal utopia” will receive its impetus to replace theory with narrative to empower humanity to break free of restraints. He calls this “emblematic” of having given up the attempt to hold all the sides of our life in a single vision or a single vocabulary defining absolutes by permitting “an endless, proliferating realization of Freedom” rather than a convergence toward an already existing Truth. More importantly his pragmatic experimentation will invite the realization of “future utopias” and still “further utopias,” as an “endless process or proliferating realizations.”¹⁶

Perhaps most importantly at least to evangelicals, Rorty wishes to further Dewey and his “soul-mate” Walt Whitman’s objective for a utopian America replacing God as the unconditional object of desire,” with the struggle for social justice as the country’s animating principle or what he calls “the nation’s soul.” He speaks favorably of Whitman and Dewey stating they “gave us all the romance, and the entire spiritual up lift we Americans need to go about our public business.” Rorty labels all other nonconformists (liberals) as “semi-conscious and anti-American” which they carried over from the frenzy’s of the late 1960s.¹⁷ Rorty’s ideal utopia or civilized society replaces the: “knowledge of God’s will, Moral Law, the Laws of History, or the Facts

of America. For Rorty national pride is to countries what self-respect is to individuals: a necessary condition for self-improvement” and for the Left to make meaningful political contributions, the Left needs to “kick its philosophy habit.” Ibid., 91.

¹⁶ Ibid., xv-xvi.

¹⁷ Rorty, *AOC*, 1998.

of Science.”¹⁸ Hence he believes that to purge language of the last traces of such capital-letter concepts as God, Mine, and the Good, so that future generations could stand tall and fearlessly confront the world as it really is.

Solidarity - Building on Weathered Ruins

The Rortyan distaste for cruelty is increased solidarity.

Solidarity is not thought of as recognition of a core self, the human essence, in all human beings. Rather, it is thought of as the ability to see more and more traditional differences (of tribe, religion, race, customs, and the like) as unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and humiliation – the ability to think of people wildly different from ourselves as included in the range of ‘us.’”¹⁹

Rorty’s utopian thinking is not original but follows pathways walked before him. Yet one cannot expect more from postmodernists who unlike their modernist predecessors constructed entirely new systems aiding the advancement of humanity. The postmodernist on the other hand often seeks to better old porridge without inventing better meal or does this leave their imaginary reconstructional reckoning somewhat flawed. Nonetheless Rorty remains uniquely anti-foundational claiming foundational developments were the result of Enlightenment scientism’s quest for survival of the religious need to have human projects underwritten by a nonhuman authority.²⁰ What Rortyan “pragmatists” seek most of all is a new world established

¹⁸ Ibid., 107.

¹⁹ Rorty, *CIS*, 192.

²⁰ The Enlightenment wove much of its political rhetoric around a picture of the scientist as a sort of priest, someone who achieved contact with nonhuman truth by being "logical," "methodical," and "objective." This was a useful tactic in its day, but it is less useful nowadays. For, the first place, the sciences are no longer the most interesting or promising or exciting area of culture. In the second place, historians of science have made clear how little this picture of the scientist has to do with actual scientific achievement, how pointless it is to try to isolate something called "the scientific method." Ibid., 52.

upon the comforts of solidarity without the requirement of a metaphysical support system that seeks to “firm up our habits” but now is “doing its job.”²¹

Rortyan Fraternal Solidarity

More so, Rorty’s fraternal core exists to provide communal solidarity between the public and private spheres of existence, proposing God consciousness has failed humankind. Thus by eliminating the transcendent, humanity has the freedom to create, control or reconstruct it according to the needs of humanity in one’s cultural tradition which should be held with dignity. The question remains “Can Rorty narrow popular traditional consensus toward an one of accept cosmopolitanism?”²²

In Rorty’s understanding solidarity is a goal to be achieved “not by inquiry but by imagination,” that ability to recognize individuals other than ourselves (strangers) as fellow sufferers. Human solidarity is that “something within each one of us – our essential humanity – which resonates to the presence of this same thing in other human beings” in short a commonality.²³ The solidarity which he seeks is created not discovered, and is achieved by increasing sensitivity to others pain making it difficult to marginalize our habitual response that pain is always with us and to excuse our responsibility to offering aid to strangers. Rorty feels it important that human solidarity

²¹ Rorty, *ORT*, 21-34.

²² Rorty announces that his liberal utopia is able to survive without religion. Yet he is willing to concede that solidarity may depend upon the “Jewish and Christian elements” within our tradition since when it comes to questions about “vocabularies as wholes, our concern should be with achieving solidarity with others in our community, not with getting reality right, that is to say, those traditions that “clothe even strangers with human dignity.” Rorty, *Ibid.*, 197-202. Further reference to Rortyan claims that he rejects the postmodern label for himself, Objectivity, provides us information which explicably includes him as a “postmodernist bourgeois liberal. *Ibid.*, 199.

²³ Rorty, *CIS*, 189.

is the recognition that pain and humiliation is universal, “cruelty is the worst thing we do,” and we are especially vulnerable to the possibility that a personal narrative or story can be destroyed.²⁴

His pragmatism differentiates between “realist” concepts of solidarity and what some would identify him as advocating “relativist” principles of solidarity. The solidarity of the realist or modernist programme seeks cohesion between the “truth” defined by a given human group and a “real” that exists objectively connecting with truth that is out there which Rorty rejects. The “relativist” on the other hand seeks solidarity of truth within a given human group, period. Thus truth is derived from within itself, not from its correspondence with the real truth out there.²⁵

Solidarity is morally neutral being characteristically “sort of like self respect” but it becomes more salient within a group of individuals who “accepting reciprocal responsibly” to other members of a common purpose: a “trade union, citizens of a country,” or “members of an army” find being. Rorty advocates that fraternity becomes the adhesive to one’s identity by which survival of the whole is dependent and where apprehension of failure is the driving force or the common effort to retain one’s individuality.²⁶

²⁴ Ibid., 19.

²⁵ Rorty rejects charges leveled at him and other pragmatists that they are merely “relativists” in the sense that any truth can hold. He rejects this because his “account of the value of cooperative human enquiry has only an ethical base, not an epistemological or metaphysical one.” (p. 24) That is, the only “truth” he buys is that which he and his group have worked out from within; it is not relative to any other truth, particularly one that is “out there” in an epistemological or metaphysical “reality.” Rorty, *ORT*, 24-26.

²⁶ Rorty refers to solidarity as a historic principle found in all common movements: “The Communist Part of the Society Union,” the Nazis, Mao’s cultural revolutionaries, “bud guys,” and Americans once had a sense of common fraternity in its quest to defeat Hitler. Yet today there is no coherence within the nation that establishes a common purpose or meaning in the

His fraternal structure centers upon the public and private lives of his community with the perspective that the idea of God consciousness has failed humanity. Thus by substituting a created solidarity and eliminating the transcendent, he proposes that we are more able to create a solidarity that can be controlled or reconstructed to fill the present needs of humanity. Yet Rorty is not wholeheartedly against “strangers” the Jewish and Christian elements in our cultural tradition which he claims should be held with dignity. So the question remains can Rorty narrow a popular traditional consensus by shunning religion, i.e. the Jewish and Christian heritage while accepting diverse cosmopolitanism.²⁷

Rorty is implying that the necessity of keeping one’s private reality or beliefs to one’s self so that no incident may occur outside one’s belief system, in this way solidarity or harmony becomes the standard by which all peoples work toward a single objective, being the purification of social injustice.²⁸ More clearly Rorty argues that the private realm must strive toward self-creation and autonomy while the public realm

world. Rorty does not believe that fighting terrorists on foreign soil or toppling ruthless dictators is a sign of fraternity given the duality of argumentation concerning political unrest. Rorty, *TCF*, 61-63.

²⁷ Rorty announces that his liberal utopia is able to survive without religion. Yet he is willing to concede that solidarity may depend upon the “Jewish and Christian elements” within our tradition since when it comes to questions about “vocabularies as wholes, our concern should be with achieving solidarity with others in our community, not with getting reality right, that is to say, those traditions that “clothe even strangers with human dignity.” Rorty, *Ibid.*, 197-202. Further reference to Rortyan claims that he rejects the postmodern label for himself, Objectivity, provides us information which explicably includes him as a “postmodernist bourgeois liberal. *Ibid.*, 199.

²⁸ Rorty believes that ethnic self fashioning is necessary to avoid lapsing into barbaric and cruel forms of social organization and practice. Here tolerance is added as a necessary ingredient of the new liberal utopia, pursued by an obligation to communitarian solidarity and ethical mutuality. Success follows as we understand how tribal communities contribute to the creation of our new world and to establish the fact of humanities triumphant declaration “Thus I willed it.” Rorty, *CIS*, 29.

concerns itself with justice, responsibility, and solidarity while affecting final vocabulary woven into one's society to retain plurality.²⁹

It seems Rorty has come full circle by seeking to eradicate social injustice by eliminating outward distinctiveness of belief of all peoples toward a common objective harmony, he has adopted a new religious faith that provides him with unfinished universal picture. All competing worldviews are ultimately competing commitments to some orienting faith, and that no conflict between worldviews can be resolved by an appeal to reason or objective standards of truth. At the core all worldviews require faith and hope.

The Rortyan Fraternal Community

Key to achieving utopia, other than eliminating Platonic dualisms whereby solidarity will ensue is Rorty's relativistic community where one's loyalty to a tribal enclave is either sufficient basis or the only basis for solidarity.

Perhaps Rorty senses that his relativism is a closed book concerning ethnocentricity and communitarianism, having evolved beyond our reasonability to

²⁹ Rorty believes much cruelty and pain have come from the assumption that values of the private sphere are applicable to the public. Thus the private should be restructured for public use and to avoid making further error we should "privatize the Nietzschean-Sartrean-Foucauldian attempts at authenticity and purity." This will free our society from assuming there is an alternative goal for society than eradicating cruelty. Ibid., 65. Rorty assures his readers that empathy, that is imagining and showing concern for the pain and humiliation of others, helps us to achieve solidarity and to expand our use of "we" to include marginalized groups formerly referred to as "they." Ibid., 92, 196-198.

In addition to our focus upon Rorty's building upon others foundations, Rorty and the ancient Greeks also believed that interrelated concepts and experience of dialogue, debate, conversation, and communication were important aspects within their society by which solidarity and friendship both personal and public was important for stressing ethics and politics.

coherently cope with social practice and moral beliefs leaving no alternative but to define our inherent reality as it coheres with one's tribal enclave.

But Rorty insists that the road to communal solidarity is contingent upon three vital values or freedoms which necessitate and are intertwined within community.

There are three: contingency of language, ego or selfhood, and the historic community.

The Necessity of Contingent Language

As stated previously Rorty tires of treading old pathways leading to dead-end theories that produce nothing but circular repetition. For him the theory of language by which philosophy follows is akin to logic rather than poetics and theology is reminiscent of mathematical propositions than metaphors all of which he calls "tired language games." He is more interested in how the role of contingency is developed within the context of individual and common consciousness.

Contingent language is born from the concept that there are no other languages to be found out there and "the world does not speak only we do." Nature is mute without narrative, meaning all accounts spoken or written are connected events (a story) either from literature, art, or music expressed through individual emotions in an imaginative way are human constructs: Rorty writes:

Truth cannot be out there ... cannot exist independently of the human mind ... so sentences cannot so exist, or be out there ... the world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not ... descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own--unaided by the describing activities of human beings--cannot.³⁰

³⁰ In the same fashion Rorty argues that language as truth is simply a human construct, and as humanity progresses old forms of truth may be discarded for new ones or old latter's replaced by improved ones. Thus Rorty empowers himself to say that religion has out grown its usefulness and is in need of liberal reform. Ibid., 5.

The same words encompass projects, doubts, loves and hates, represent boundaries, and limit an individual's mental ordering of the world, and house one's meaning of self and society. Furthermore says Rorty when individuals are called to question their beliefs and, doubts they have no defense or circular argumentation or linguistic resource to call upon other than what Rorty describes as verbal sets or "final vocabularies."

According to Rorty, language exemplifies every one's lives by which they identify their personal narrative and meaning of life. He agrees concurs with Nietzsche's definition that truth is "a mobile army of metaphors,"³¹ and vocabulary is inherited from ancestry or their gods. Neither is it necessary to worship the dead corpses of their dead metaphors:

All human beings carry about a set of words which they employ to justify their actions, their beliefs, and their lives ... (they also) employ them at times to prospectively and sometimes retrospectively tell life's stories.³²

³¹ Nietzsche did not only teach this in his philosophical writing, he also sought to demonstrate it in the writing of his own life: to exemplify the "private perfection", as Rorty puts it, of a self-created, autonomous individuality. This he did by employing a philosophical language and style for the stating of his hopes for himself and humanity which was particular to him, and, at almost the same time, by signaling recognition of the contingency of that language. Hence, even as he sought to remain faithful to it, to live faithfully by it, Nietzsche only desisted from calling attention to the situations of his writing (in time and place) and only desisted from a process of continually redescribing his hopes, self and world (in new languages, employing new metaphors) when his mental powers utterly deserted him (and he went mad). Ibid., xiv.

³² Ibid., 192, 73. Rorty also expresses his thoughts concerning dead vocabulary that has outlasted its usefulness such as Greek metaphysics and Christian theology. Ironically Rorty an individual concerned about replicating one's self according to another pattern falls victim to Dewey and Martin Heidegger who called the onto-theological tradition as useful for "one's ancestors" purposes, but today we possess entirely different purposes, which will be better served by "employing a different vocabulary. "Our ancestors climbed up a ladder which we are now in position to throw away. We can throw it away not because we have reached a final resting place, but because we have different problems to solve than those which perplexed our ancestors." Rorty, *PSH*, xxii.

Rorty insists that we become free from old patterns of thinking and develop new patterns of speaking well, realizing that we are forever bound by the vocabularies of our ancestors or their gods. Freedom will be described not by old myths of the mind as the mirror of nature, which will indeed become the chief instrument of cultural and political change, that is, “speaking differently” rather than “arguing well” is, and should be, the chief instrument of social change.³³

We have described the first of three Rortyan contingent values necessary to reconstruct national solidarity. Rorty offers us a freedom from stuck-in-the mud rationalism that has the capacity to “freeze over” our culture, meaning performance has been replaced by truth resulting in the stagnation of the sensibilities. He claims the objective agenda of the philosophic academy has lost touch with reality and truth, that is, their language games have not resulted in freedom but oppression. Thus if we are unable to make distinctions between truth and fiction our language speaks for us—we are bound to a “prison house of language.” This is basis enough for Rorty and postmodernists to claim truth is relative to those who interpret it. Rorty assumes skeptical inability provides the framework for history to be renowned for its network of agnostic (contrived) language games that have been rhetorically manipulated to support alternative agendas and as a result history becomes subject to revisionist scholars who may reinterpret historic narratives that are in vogue, such as heroic

³³ Nostalgia over the absence of such settled criteria is also out of place here. Rorty thinks that “a talent for speaking differently, rather than for arguing well, is the chief instrument of cultural change,” and he shares with the romantics a visionary appreciation for how “changing languages and other social practices may produce human beings of a sort that never before existed” (CIS 7). Inventing vocabularies, reweaving webs of belief, and the consequent redescriptive remaking of ourselves are among the human possibilities that Rorty most enthusiastically celebrates. Charles Guignon and David R. Hiley, eds., *Richard Rorty: Contemporary Philosophy in Focus*. (Mass: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 94.

figures of American history Abraham Lincoln and Christopher Columbus who have been likely passed off as heroic examples to advocate a given agenda and for this reason society is inherently oppressive.

A Christian Response

Christians may value Rortyan and postmodern thought to a degree, but then will have to change their approach or scholarship. We can agree with Rorty that meaning is made up of language but language goes further than simply human phenomenon. Language follows revelation:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made, without him nothing was made that had been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. ... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.³⁴

The Christian agrees that God's word is intrinsic to His being and personality just as language is essentially a communicative distinctive of the human race. Language existed before the physical universe existed and God's language made the world according to Genesis 1:3 "God said, 'let there be light,' and there was light." He brings into existence whatever he declares,

Rorty is correct when he states that there is a centrality of speech common to humanity, but he also states language is a prison house – a cultural creation. Thus Rorty agrees that language is evident through racial diversity, but fails to accommodate meaning outside of language that reveals divine language, just as science is not

³⁴ John 1:1-5, 14. (NASB).

necessarily making up mental models but in a sense reading the divine language inscribed upon the canvas of the universe.

Contingency for Self Development

Rorty's second premise – freedom is necessary and contingent upon self-constructed values. For Rorty self-creative imagination or subjectivity is necessary to escape traditional modes of thinking that purpose of humanity is to replicate or copy another's narrative, poem, or form as an ideal ethical lifestyle. Perhaps Rorty would place such narrative form into the same arena as plagiarism, nevertheless he calls upon Nietzsche's thoughts that language is entanglement with history, time, and chance and with Freud's instructions that we ought to think of our particular actions and idiosyncrasies in terms of response to or reaction against many past influences and present stresses.

We may indeed suffer guilt and shame if we fail to meet the expectations of parental, pastoral, or priestly figures in our lives. But the morality of the strong poet represented by Rortyan narrative learns to condemn *herself* more for failure to break free of the past rather than for failure to live up to some standard considered universal or binding by her community of origin. Hence Rorty is taken with the story of conscious morality and selfhood which bear the "marks of blind-impress" as determining our chance worthy fate. Here Rorty assumes that ethical behavior is born of conscious decision and may be traced to reason, will, and responsibility that caused the failure of humanity to escape pain and suffering, aside from wickedness that he

fails to understand as something deeper and darker than unconscious forces can emulate.³⁵

The creativity of the novelist, poet, or journalist is to provide a voice for victims of cruelty and suffering who are unable to speak for themselves because “they are suffering too much to put new words together”³⁶ and because we come to *consciousness* within contingency of language causal beings need not become mere replicas or copies of someone else’s story, poem, or model of the moral self. Thus to fail as a poet, thus as a human being, is to accept someone else’s description of oneself.

The topic of conscious behaviorism combined with linguistic contingency is not a new one, although recent research regarding the brain and its relationship with behavioral constructs has again become the controversy of the day. There is little doubt that Rorty would disagree with scientific data that someday conscious activity will be located in the brain resulting as a common distinction between all peoples. If science has made an evolutionary break-through providing evidence that belief systems and human choice are conscious constructs made from neural flesh and behavior can be altered to eradicate values causing suffering and shame. Furthermore such technology will make it impossible to deny our common capacity to suffer and dissolve erratic and irrational tendencies to cause harm:

When you think about it, the doctrine of a life-to-come is not such an uplifting idea after all because it necessarily devalues life on earth. Just remember the

³⁵ Rorty applauds Freud who treats rationality as a mechanism which adjusts contingencies to other contingencies ... he helps us take seriously the possibility that there is no central faculty, no central self, called “reason” – and thus ... gives us a vocabulary for self-description. Rorty, *CIS*, 32-33.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 94.

most famous people in recent memory who acted in expectation of a reward in the hereafter: the conspirators who hijacked the airliners on 9/11.³⁷

Although Rorty agrees that conscience is the internalized voice of parents, ancestors, though dead still speak in identifiable ways as does church and society, but Rorty is not so taken with reconstructing moral values inscribed on the hardware of the mind or to create humanized clones. He believes that self-consciousness produces misery and should be discarded especially, if there is no true self about which to be conscious about.³⁸ He also resists the distinction of inculcating himself in the same camp as other intellectuals who value self-consciousness. This leaves us to wonder if Rorty really believes his doctrine of self as being true or useful. Yet pragmatists deny the truth and utility of that distinction.

His is a fascination with Freudian *narcissistic origins* how unconscious imprints form upon the conscience in radically contingent ways from language to selfhood to community. Rorty calls this *blind impress* whereby behavior is neither private nor public but is integrated by accidental coincidence of a private obsession with a public need.³⁹

³⁷ Pinker's take: It's not just that an understanding of the physiology of consciousness will reduce human suffering through new treatments for pain and depression. That understanding can also force us to recognize the interests of other beings – the core of morality." Steven Pinker, *The Mystery of Consciousness*, (Time Magazine, 19 January 2007), 69-70.

³⁸ According to Rorty and postmodernists we do well without conscious reality that encumbers truth. If we are to accept a conscious reality, let it be a virtual one. That is, without being separated by personal worlds that we experience and lose ourselves within, since all worlds are not the same as every one else's. We do not create our reality but inherit someone else's programmed or manufactured mental image of reality. Thus our so called personal reality is not reality at all being at the mercy of our programmers.

³⁹ Rorty, *CIS* 31.

Thus Rorty probes deeper than scientists who believe humanity will soon possess revolutionary technology to access the conscience, recontextualize behavior, and further establish a commonality to human suffering and solidarity. The Rortyan passion is to find the motivational impress – that which motivates the student or disciple to the compassionate life of self-sacrifice, to work for peace and justice, to go to the fiery stake of the martyr or to be driven by love for master and neighbor, an emotional conviction fostered in the super-ego of Freudian theory or an untold private fantasy coupled with conscious morality and selfhood.

Although Rorty would rather do away with self-consciousness (an area of concern that he cannot find room for invention), as Freud insists unless the conscience curbs or tames cruelty the greatest problem of civilization – aggression will emerge as the tyrant of the age.

Human Nature and Conscience

Scientists speculate an age of “new morality an uncharted frontier of behavioral ethics that will forever put to rest improvable myths and dogmas of the immortal soul. How? Scientific research claims it will soon discover the technology discerning the conscious behavioral core of the human mind, that is, the core by which we make willful decisions of choice and conduct.

Is it possible that “science has killed the soul” having added to Nietzsche’s statement “God is dead.” Are we on the fringe of another utopian premise of human perfectionism as the Nazi’s had prescribed or have we disturbed a prison house language that may threaten human existence an opening of Pandora’s Box to a “lurid

carnival that will ensue may make the phrase ‘the total eclipse of all values’ seem tame.”⁴⁰

The subject of conscience plays a key role in evangelical renewal and thus Christians ought to be concerned with concepts such as “new morality.” At best Rortyan theory and Scientific behaviorism offer relief to surface causes, and pragmatism’s celebratory freedom can only starve the ability of conscience to speak clearly too behavioral convictions that have been constructed to check evil within the human nature rather than those created to meet vacillating styles of self creationism.

While Rorty assumes conscience is subjectively imaginative, it is more inclined to be discriminate and impulsive. It is discriminative in relation to known law of right or wrong and impulsively obligatory as something that constitutes the revelation of God. Its Greek equivalent *suneidesis*, means an accompanying knowledge, that is, a knowing of our moral acts and states in connection with some moral standard of law which is conceived of as our true self. Thus the conscience discerns an anticipated course of action or an attitude in harmony with our moral standard or not, and insists to do that which is in harmony with it and refrains from that which is contrary to it. The office of conscience is to bear witness (Romans 2:15) and when disregarded the feeling of remorse and fear of punishment that follow are not necessarily products of conscience, but of the sensibilities.

⁴⁰ “Scientists have exorcised the ghost from the machine not because they are mechanistic killjoys but because they have amassed evidence that was every aspect of consciousness can be tied to the brain. Using functional MRI, cognitive neuroscientists can almost read people’s thoughts from the blood flow in their brains. They can tell, for instance, whether a person is thinking about a face or a place or whether a picture the person is looking at is of a bottle or a shoe.” Pinker, *Mystery of Conscience*, 62-70.

Conscience is not self-imposed as Rorty would have it or have it done away with; it is the reflection of God in the soul. As a “mirror and the smooth surface of the lake reflect the sun and reveal not only its existence, but also to some extent its nature, so consciousness in man reveals both the existence of God and, to some extent the nature of God.” It also reveals to us not only that He is, but that He sharply distinguishes between the right and wrong (Romans 2:14-16); and always does what is right holding the rational creature responsible for always doing the right and abstaining from the wrong while implying every transgression will be punished.⁴¹

Rorty and Science would have conscience reconstructed or eliminated, but again this is discourse that Rorty is familiar for:

From one angle, this is the familiar discourse of historicist denial of human nature: there is no such thing as human nature, it is said, because we form and transform ourselves, or are formed by our social relations; we make up our own nature. In fact, we do and we also don't, as is borne out by, amongst other things, the important similarities with respect to pain and humiliation.⁴²

Rorty leads us to ask two important questions concerning human nature, which we will discuss here in the form of conscience. Is conscience indescribable and is it infallible? First conscience cannot be done away with – it cannot be destroyed since it is an intrinsic to the human nature but it can be defied (1 Corinthians 8:7; Titus 1:15), it can be *seared* (1 Timothy 4:2). Many hardened sinners have testified of being stirred

⁴¹ Thiessen concludes that in conscience we have another revelation of God. Its prohibitions and commands, its decisions, and urges, would not have any real authority over us if we did not feel that in conscience we somehow have reality, something in our nature that is yet above that nature. In other words, it reveals the fact that there is a Supreme Lawgiver Who embodies this law in His own person and conduct. Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Printing Company, 1949), 34-35.

⁴² Rorty, *ORT*, 123.

up by reproachful accusations of the conscience causing torment of soul. Second; The conscience judges according to the standard given it. If the moral standard accepted by the intellect is imperfect, the decisions of conscience, though relatively just, may be wholly unjust. Conscience is uniform and infallible in the sense that it always decides rightly according to the law given it.⁴³

Christians may accept Rorty's statement that language, tradition, and beliefs are often historically and socially inherited, and those voices are subject to reinterpretation given we are fallible beings and our conscience judges according to what it is given to discriminate. But Christians may add that knowledge is an unreliable source for making judgment claims having become perverted through sin we are subject to incorrect interpretation, motives, and values that often gags conscience from its obligation to the sensitivities of pure conviction.

Thus we may ascertain being fallible creatures owing an indestructible conscience are subject to right and wrong according to the divine edicts of God – the divine law giver and by nature wish to make good and logical decisions for the betterment of humanity. But since sin entered in conscience has also become subject to the law of flesh (Romans 7:23), performing those things set on natural desires or the mind of sinful man (Romans 8:8), since conscience judges according to the social standards given it.

⁴³ Thiessen writes: "It has repeatedly happened on foreign fields that when a heathen who has never heard of the true God, followed his innate convictions that there is a God and sought after Him, he found his way to some missionary that could tell him the way of salvation. The purpose of God to provide salvation for man is thus indicated in the remnant of the knowledge of God which He allowed man to retain." Thiessen, *Lectures*, 229.

Finally the only standard for conscience is the Word of God as interpreted by the Holy Spirit. When the conscience judges according to other standards its decisions are not certainly infallible, but when it judges according to the standard of divinely inspired Scriptures, its verdict is absolutely infallible.

The human conscience is an important element when perceiving the dictates of the human heart and on the Rortyan scale knowledge being an instrument for reconstruction and conscience a modifiable vehicle for correct choice produces romanticism. For example a company seeks to motivate its employees to better serve customers and in doing so they employ terminology such as “excellence” as a standard by which customers may perceive them. But because reality was not coherently attainable excellence could not be measured, as a result, the company insisted that the employees exhibit an “impression of excellence” rather than applying a traditional statement - an “expression of excellence.”

THE CHRISTIAN DILEMMA

We have sought to define the meaning of conscience within Rortyan pragmatic instrumentalism⁴⁴ as a necessary component of modern epistemology. But how has Rortyan or postmodern sociologic causes been imposed upon the fabric of the evangelical mind or how might postmodern pragmatism become a boon to Christian life.

⁴⁴ In philosophy instrumentalism is defined as the pragmatic philosophy of John Dewey and Richard Rorty which supposes that thought is an instrument for solving practical problems not fixed in truisms but as an evolutionary or progressive process contributing toward solving suffering and oppression.

The focus here is with the understanding that we live in a complex watershed of history by which society is neither distinguished as modern or postmodern. There is no indication that there is a dominant winner or that there must be one. Our culture will continue, at least into the reasonable future, to face critics of both pre-modern and ultra-modern perspectives.

Our concern is to address two factors contending for doctrinal lethargy and the conscience of evangelicals, individualism and traditionalism.

Individualism

Rorty argues that we can make ourselves into what we will as long as “the nature of truth,” “the nature of man,” and the “nature of God” are inherently “unprofitable topics.” Rorty recommends that “we in fact say little about these topics, and see how we get on.”

How are we getting along seems to be the topic of the day. In Christendom mainline churches in the United States are facing a deadly crisis: It is commonplace where annual membership is in decline, average attendance has plateaued, the age of members continue to rise, and the capacity to keep or attract the youth culture seems impossible. The crises lay not necessarily in demographics, better leadership, or education, but the reality that church has forgotten Christian doctrine as the life blood or foundation of the church. One can almost hear Rorty’s echoing reply “doctrine divides, and service unites” or celebrating that “all religions are really the same, aren’t they?” Such expressions are shouldered by relativism and perhaps more unique is the triteness of which statements are accepted.

One catalyst to ecclesiological regress is individualism – the habit or principle of being independent as a self-reliant attitude. Individualism is a necessary component of both modern and postmodernist epistemology (knowledge with regard to its methods, validity, and scope, and the distinction between justified belief and or opinion) whether objective or subjective in mental development the autonomous individual is at the apex of self independence – a conviction that they have no need of anyone. Within religion this is characterized by a position that individual experience and conscience are the arbiters of doctrine.

In the arena of autonomous freedom (ideal modernist) or self creative (pragmatic postmodernist) religious doctrine cannot be communally normative just as modern humanism conflicts with communal norms and pragmatic humanism conflicts with foundational values. Thus individualism has caused doctrinal marginalization as an appeal to autonomous individuality translating doctrine into an enfeeblement of irrational fantasy or mysticism especially in Rortyan vernacular “there is no magic sky hook out there” no transcendent or recognizable metaphysical concepts. Too often such concepts have entered into mainline Protestantism leaving us little understanding of church except that of voluntary association or a collection of like minded individuals pursuing some democratically decided upon goals.

Perhaps the term doctrine is in need of rescue from social forms of knowledge or culture within themselves to “living beliefs” or to some a “speech act of the church” in the Rortyan sense a living drama expressed in doctrine telling the church how to live out that drama. Here doctrine explains the plot, the setting, and the *dramatis personae*. In such a way the stigma of doctrine per se will be overcome not by re-appropriation of

ignorance, but of disobedience and thus reclaim the voice a pure conscious and better yet an ecclesiology of practice forming coherent disciples of internally based expressions of reality.⁴⁵

Thus the term doctrine must represent more than a system of beliefs, rather:

Doctrine is a speech act of the church ... and within this framework doctrine functions to lead the church in its life in God's Kingdom ... But what can it mean to attribute a speech act to a community as a whole? ... There are three reasons. First religion is a cultural linguistic phenomenon and that doctrine is the grammar of that culture. In other words, doctrine functions to make the saying of something possible, not for the actual making of religious utterances.⁴⁶

We have shown that individualism is one cause for marginalization of Christian doctrine and practice having its roots in the modern centrality of knowledge and continuance within the Rortyan framework of self creationism. But the solution is born not out of Rortyan deconstruction or to recontextualize knowledge or language but a better ecclesiology by which the church may be moved from a feeble minded construct of volunteerism to one of a conscious reality of truth.

⁴⁵ This writers contention is that while the problem of the marginalization of doctrine in the modern church has roots in modern centrality of knowledge, the solution lies not in a better theory of knowledge (which is simply continuing to play by modern rules) but in better ecclesiology. Ultimately the question "What is doctrine?" is not about knowledge, but about the church. Richard Heyduck, *The Recovery of Doctrine in the Contemporary Church: An Essay in Philosophical Ecclesiology*, (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2002), x - xi.

⁴⁶ Heyduck is convinced that "epistemology," "individualism" and "dehistoricization" – did not merely appear from nowhere, but were "outgrowths of earlier features of western culture. "In identifying modernity as the seedbed of doctrinal marginalization he claims whatever the "doctrinal failures of earlier eras, it was in this period that significant segments of the church came to see doctrine itself as dispensable, or perhaps worthy of outright rejection." Ibid.

Traditionalism

Tradition in the Rortyan sense is made up of inherent vocabulary and “dead metaphors.” If this is all tradition holds then traditional language rids the individual of purpose and meaning in the way it relates to one’s essence. Thus individualism and traditionalism become obscured from necessary core values (mainstays) of life. For Christendom this route leads beyond the central nucleus of individual being or solidarity of existence with one’s world. But also the domain of revelation and meta-narrative which encompasses creature and creator. Thus it is the bond of individualism and traditionalism that Rorty argues for deconstruction reinstituted within the framework of democracy.

Furthermore we may add traditional Liberal Philosophy for the most part, has rejected tradition as irrational and excessively authoritarian. Postmodernist revisionists dissolve history; pragmatists make no distinction between truth and fiction; and Rorty concludes history is a network of language games where criterion for success is performance not “truth.”⁴⁷

Traditionally Rorty does nothing new. The rejection of tradition became the modernist way of standing outside the typical standard (religious community) as an unobstructed analyst forming an opinion without commitment to the tradition. Thus objective freedom was the observer’s guide dictating tradition was irrational and belief was dangerously authoritarian to those enmeshed in legalism. The outsider is therefore

⁴⁷ Since there is no objective truth, history may be rewritten according to the needs of a particular group. If history is nothing more than “a network of agonistic [i.e. fighting, contending] language games, then any alternative “linguistic game” that advances a particular agenda that meets “success” in countering institutional power can pass as legitimate history. “Performance, not truth” is the only criterion. Scholarship becomes rhetorical manipulation. Truth does not have to get in the way. Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 57.

free to take a position of allegiance to reason dictating that tradition was irrational and belief dangerously authoritarian to those enmeshed in its legalistic expression.⁴⁸

Although Rortyan antifoundationalism (subjectivism) replaces modern objectivity he follows the modern synthesis of free agency. Rorty concludes that traditionally imposed language games or obligatory statements are essential to the Christian cause to enforce commitment, belief, and action. But also created are hierarchical foundations to control individual and corporate behavior through language such as: heaven and hell. Assurance of salvation, and commitment to the Christian community. In this way Rorty feels the necessity to recontextualize central epistemology by reducing tradition to a body of inherited information that has left individuals blind to their own immersion in (and subservience to) a tradition.

A Christian Response

Rortyan pragmatism and postmodern relativism seek to turn the tide from traditional values and foundational methods believing it will better individual and secular freedoms by illuminating injustice and oppression. The Rortyan method is to rewrite history and to recontextualize doctrine. But they offer little or nothing but a shallow perspective of life.

Rorty proposal is reminiscent of a poorly skilled artisan whose jumbled collage of pieced together forms produce a meaningless portrait in comparison to modernist painters whose paintings have structural relevance to reality. In the philosophic sense

⁴⁸ Rorty is an example of an outsider seeking reality typifying himself with the suffering, the wild orchids (outsiders looking in) who are unnoticeably crushed under foot while domestic orchids are entertained with grandeur (tradition) belonging to those who represent power and authority while ruling over the lesser.

Rorty and postmodernists portrays a world villainized by modernist scholars. But revolutionary scholars such as Rorty seek to paint over old portraits with new images of hope discarding others that provide little hope for moral refurbishment or to be re-contextualized. What Rorty offers American society is a new Rome whereby all concepts of morality are burned away and evaluated according to the needs of the majority. An example of Rortyan speculation is the freedom to practice abortion, pander to sexual license, neglects illegal aliens, and accept the practice of feminist or gay agendas in the name of equality. But to accept certain practices according to the loudest voice will not support the gay agenda nor will their lifestyle prove to better lives of the West. Nevertheless the contemporary is in and tradition is what Rorty calls a language game.⁴⁹

Concerning the decline of church attendance and the inability to attract newcomers such as a youth culture is the relativistic marginalization of values such as true and false, or realism and fantasy.

The marginalizing dictum of revisionist scholars or process theologians offer a façade by which Christians are more apt to serve the church out of “volunteerism” rather than becoming involved in the intricacies of knowing the Chief Architect of the church.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Rorty and postmoderns are open to history but view the past from another lens of “feminism, multiculturalism and post Marxist politics” ... “Postmodernism has history, but not a sense of history, since all historical moments are reduced, swallowed up by the contemporary, and relativized” Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 98-100.

⁵⁰ Liberal philosophical historians pandering multiculturalism have become blinded to an ecclesiology within their cultural surroundings leading them to derive doctrine from the predominant narrative of their surrounding culture as a result the traditional dominant culture derive statements such as “God is love.” Hayduck, *Recovery of Doctrine*, 2.

Postmodern culture is “without depth” points to another stylistic feature of the arts. In contrast to modernism, postmodernism has, (according to Harvey), a “fixation with appearances, surfaces, and instant impacts that have no sustaining power over time.” People who have no beliefs lack a sense of personal identity and an inner life. They are thus, in every sense of the term, superficial⁵¹

There are two questions the Christian may ask when approached with questions of tradition. The first is the question of *origin* and the second the question of *purpose*. Both questions can be applied to philosophers as well as nominal Christians.

The question of origin, “where did I come from?” is as old as humankind itself. But not all philosophers believe there is a knowable answer to this question. Rorty, an atheist and evolutionist, sidesteps the question; by answering such question have no relevance to the progress of civilization. But the Christian may reply that a thoughtful individual would continue to ask the question. Nevertheless the Christian philosopher will point to the Bible and the first chapters of Genesis to establish the significance of God’s revelation to humanity. Revelation plays an import role in answering questions concerning origin as well as purpose.

The second question ponders the purpose of life: “Why am I here?” or “What the reason for my existence?” The question is answered differently by varying philosophers and individuals. Some are at a loss for words and refrain from asking basic questions of life. Others choose not to answer as to fulfill the “Socratic” dictum “examining” life’s purposes.

Revelation plays an important role in answering questions regarding the purpose of life. This includes Rorty’s point that revelation is an unfolding never ceasing

⁵¹ Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 136.

narrative of ideas and actions unfolding within the “democratic community.” Yet under this premise we may explain that any common goal, right or wrong, provides purpose for the September 11’ 2001 attack was a purposeful expression of the militant Muslim community. Nevertheless, Rorty believes as Dewey, that revelation of truth is the basis for democratic community to displace segregation.⁵²

Thus Rorty, who is an advocate of Darwin’s concept that the human mind, reason and knowledge are products of the organism itself, struggles with questions concerning special or “Divine revelation” as opposed to general revelation, which is learned from observing the world as Heyduck pointed out earlier.⁵³ Furthermore, the theological or philosophical positions valuing reason as the ultimate arbiter and judge of all statements rejects revelation is a form of secular humanism.⁵⁴ Christians on the other hand respond to questions of purpose expressed through a fulfilled existence, testifying

⁵² Rorty agrees with Dewey that revelation is a process of unfolding--rather than the singular revelation of unchanging Truth, as might be suggested by some more traditional accounts -Dewey is able to argue that the truest agent of religious faith available to modern man is not organized religion, which has crystallized into a defender of unbending doctrine, but rather the more open-ended activity of democratic life. Rather than a revelation from on high, democracy "enables us to get our truths in a natural, everyday and practical sense" Deneen, *Politics of Hope*, 593 – 596.

⁵³ We add that historically philosophy was not necessarily liberal or atheist in nature. Newton was deeply religious and studied Scripture along with the natural world. He did not find contradictions between the truths he discovered by scientific investigation on the one hand and study of the Bible on the other. His successors, however, increasingly rejected the Bible as a means to attain knowledge; they valued the truths uncovered by empirical investigation more than the truths received from special revelation. In time reason came to replace revelation as the accepted source of true knowledge, and natural philosophy grew into modern science.

God restores humans' sense of proportion. In the process of redeeming humanity, the resurrection distinguishes humans from God, redefines humans as finite but free. God's revelation of his infinity frees human beings from the delusion that they are or ever can be gods. Thus from a Christian perspective, people need to pause in the quest for meaning only to make certain that they have chosen the good rather than the bad and that they remain grounded in trust. Irving Hexham, and Karla Poewe, *New Religions as Global Cultures: Making the Human Sacred*, (Boulder, CO: West view Press, 1997), 146 - 158.

⁵⁴ Norman L. Geisler and Paul D. Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980), 37.

of God's grace, and taking pleasure in God.

We have described the second of Rorty's three contingents. First, solidarity is contingent upon language – “the world does not speak only we do” suggesting human reason is the center of divine convention. We argued that conscience is not imposed by human reasoning but meets Divine language inscribed upon the canvas of the universe. Second, Rorty assumes solidarity of language and offers us self-creation freeing humanity from being replicas of someone else's story. The Christian replies by asking questions that demand a verdict such as: the origin of life – “Where did I come from?” and the purpose of life - “Why are we here?”

The third contingency for Rortyan utopian solidarity is the necessity of a contingent community.

The Necessity of a Contingent Community

We may assume if language and selfhood are necessary contingents, community must complement or complete the Rortyan triad for solidarity.

The global community of Rorty is one of breaking free from past social norms, including responsibility to older forms of communal conformity in contrast to closely knit ancestral or communitarian accents. Rorty argues that conformity will cripple one's curiosity about the stories of others found in literature. In fact, Rorty argues that literary criticism has become the central intellectual discipline for those seeking moral advice beyond the universalizing temptations of philosophy, and the moralizing tone of theology. He directs Americans to enlarge their mental borders by enlarging their scope of language, self, and, community. He recommends we include ourselves in as many language games and vocabularies as possible by reading novels, poetry, ethnographies,

journals, and criticisms. He also bids his followers to be revolutionaries of progress, imagination, and societal change, writing: “there is no answer to a description but a redescription.”⁵⁵

Rorty feels that a healthy democratic and liberal community is one of multicultural diversity contingent upon the West remaining open to other cultures. This results in a progressive Western culture reliant upon overlapping communities of discourse and practice. It is important to note that Rorty can be differentiated from some postmodern counterparts who argue for a communitarian emphasis in the West. Yet Rorty disagrees with communitarian theorists who choose to segment society into organized enclaves of small self governing communities and chastises the new left and the political right for their inability to articulate a hopeful vision for a pluralistic democracy.

The Rortyan view of community is ecumenically born of diversity.⁵⁶ He argues that individuals spend too much time worrying about “wrong things,” such as, “what culture do we come from or what is our relation to that culture? These questions only

⁵⁵ Rorty, *CIS*, 80.

⁵⁶ Furthermore Rorty fears that communitarian practice would further increase cultural ambiguity, demonstrate less tolerance for strangers, and create a greater risk for oppression from stronger dominant self-governing communities as well as individual secession from obligations to tribal counsel, besides Rorty is more concerned with the politics of individuality.

Rorty’s concept points toward celebrating an “Emersonian” type story which provides how individuals freely walk away from identification with a given group or community to “carve out a personal identity rather than turn to group mores to ask how the individual might find his plot and place in some collective identity.” Thus Rorty’s communal solidarity is forged with a democratic atmosphere of freedom of choice, experience, and plurality. For example if an individual becomes tired of Christianity they are free to look to other fields of interest providing self awareness and involvement such as in a Muslim community and through doctrine of tolerance others would encourage the individual to freely experiment without question or reprisal. Derek Nystron and Ken Puckett, *Against Bosses, Against Oligarchies: A Conversation with Richard Rorty*, (Charlottesville: Prickly Pear Pamphlets, 1998), 26-29.

shield individuals from freely entering into the risk and adventure of Emerson's stories of self-creation.

Rorty's convictions lead us to believe that in order to return to social solidarity we must first challenge our traditional vocabulary of beliefs, but we must remember Rortyan pragmatism is contingent upon vocabulary, time, and place (chance) and he is passionately committed to social hopes "a global, cosmopolitan, egalitarian, classless society."⁵⁷

Although Rorty contends that his democratic society is comprised of personal and critical intellectuals either revolutionary or poetic artists, they must be citizens committed to private irony.

CITIZENS OF THE NEW ORDER

The Ironist

Citizens of the new order are called "Ironists."⁵⁸

The "ideal citizen" of Rorty's liberal utopia is someone who eschews (avoids) the need for foundations and is fully conscious of the contingency of his or her "language ... conscience ... morality, and highest hopes"⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Rorty, *PSH*, xvi.

⁵⁸ In his last book, *Philosophy after Philosophy: Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*, Rorty intersects the categories of contingency and solidarity with that of irony, which he paints as a strictly philosophical domain. Irony represents the disenchanted pose that the new type of thinker, the "ironic liberal," must assume in order to become "sufficiently historicist and nominalist" to realize the contingency of his most profound convictions. As Socratic as he is Voltairean, the philosopher of neo-pragmatism is at the service of "liberal utopia," which he believes is not so much the destiny of human nature or of history, as simply the best idea that men have produced from the objectives for which they work. Solidarity thus is not discovered through the systematic rigor of reflection; rather, it is created, allowed to flow out, from the transgressive value of irony. Rorty, *CIS*, 105.

For further understanding of ironic liberal values and liberal utopianism see: Borradori, *The American Philosopher*.

⁵⁹ Rorty, *CIS*, 1.

The ironist is a fabled individual of Rortyan construction who questions “his” or “her” personal reality. Those morally inherited constructs of ancestral conviction and commitments that have outlasted their usefulness, for example: God and or metaphysics, objective evidence, and the correspondence theory of truth.⁶⁰ The new citizen insists upon the necessity of questioning personal convictions and commitments to actions that have become anchors to the soul or “final vocabularies” since she has encountered and is impressed by other final vocabularies in people of character in books and art:

The ironist reads literary critics, and takes them as moral advisers, simply because such critics have an exceptionally large range of acquaintance. They are moral advisers not because they have special access to moral truth but because they have been around⁶¹

The character of the ironist is representative of the term, that is, a relative (free) spirit seeking escape from conscious or fixated norms of moral advice to progressively experience new vistas of personal morality. The ironist quest for self actualization – a kind of authenticity, perfection, and purity is to be embodied in the public life of the believer, but should never slip into the political attitude suggesting there is some theoretical social goal more important than avoiding cruelty and for Rorty there is

⁶⁰ As stated earlier Rorty is an adherent of the coherence theory of truth by which there is no way to decide between belief systems because each system has its own self accountability or a statement may be coherent with a system of judgments, but not applicable to the real world. Correspondence on the other hand is the act, fact, or state of agreeing or conforming to similarity or analogy. Rorty argues not to present a theory of true beliefs or statements which correspond to the intrinsic nature of reality and also against the view that we now need a new theory of truth to replace the correspondence theory. Rorty is concerned if a new device for testing truth emerged from the metaphysicians’ his task may prove more difficult to disavow. He feels that if one leaves the correspondence theory to itself in the future it will no longer be a viable option. Thus progress will be made and pragmatism will become a force for truth. Rorty, *TAP*, 11.

⁶¹ Rorty, *CIS*, 80, 143.

none. For this reason Rorty insists on building a wall between private and political values.

Community and Political Thought - A Wall between Them

The purpose of Rortyan society is to provide hope or a kinder gentler place. A place of reform and increased political usefulness, greater contingency for truth, freedom, and justice and with “lady luck” (an important figure in Rortyan vocabulary) while providing his liberal society with optimistic tales about itself or how things are improving.⁶²

Rortyan theory does not deem there must be a social structure linking public and private strands into a cohesive whole. He follows Jeffersonian politics that human nature, moral agency, and authentic life are irrelevant not necessitating shared beliefs concerning private conscience, resulting in justice as a political application rather than a philosophical one. Such a concept offers tolerance as the link between politics and private morality.

Since public and private realms are somewhat estranged in their existential purpose as a means to sever private conscience from political issues than leaving each entity to its own demise he supplies each strand a cohesive obligation.

⁶² This is a story by which he believes there is “no insuperable obstacles in this story coming true. Although one must ask Rorty how hope alone can replace a societal structure by which he fails to direct his readers toward a constructive plan of attack. We must assume his hope provides more than its meaning can bear without having an objectively structured blueprint for success.

Note: Further study on the topic of conscience and the will refer to: Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1894).

The *private* (existential) strand is reserved for self-fashioning through pragmatic implemented principles of contingency, truth, freedom, values, and loyalty as amendments to society. The private contingent aspect of life should lead each to realize that stripped of the metaphysical, truth is made and not discovered, there is no essence for self-elaboration, no common human nature binding us to our fellows or grounding community values. Rorty's conjecture for humanity is to orient ourselves that society is ours to create, ours to shape, and ours to control. Our intellectual heritage will enable us to identify with our community and find freedom in the concept we are not nature shaped or found. Rorty says what matters most, "is our loyalty to other human beings clinging together against the dark, not our hope of getting things right."⁶³

The Rortyan system relies upon tolerance for the privatized life-style living in harmony with relativism, a type of anchor of behavioral acceptance. Thus the private life offers an individual the freedom to follow one's vision of bliss, become involved in personal obsessions or glean from other's personal ethic and, finally the opportunity to manicure one's willful character. On the other side of the divide one finds the public sphere a place to broaden the ethical and distinctive horizons and obligation to political and social institutions. Rorty is certain that the "ultimate synthesis is love and justice may turn out to be an intricately textured collage of private narcissism and public pragmatism."⁶⁴

The *public* (programmatic) strand elaborates upon need of political office and is obligated to solidarity and social justice. Rorty honors individuals such as Dewey and

⁶³ Rorty, *PSH*, 274.

⁶⁴ Rorty, *CIS*, 210.

Whitman calling them torchbearers of leftist political progressivism. He holds disdain for twentieth-century democratic leftists whom he believes have spent too much deliberation on concrete democratic principles of reform and who should return to the traditional reformist leftist politics of the New Deal. Yet Rorty's return is not an adequate term to use. He is hardly reminiscing but seeking to develop a new core of progressive intellectuals, workers, and intellectual ironists to eradicate issues of racism, poverty, and economic equality.

Rorty believes, at least in this era, society should be optimistically informed that possibilities are getting better for at least the prospects of an American liberal society. But can we be certain that Rorty is feeling comfortable as the conservatives paint the term "liberal" in a negative light or as present economic trends suggest that there may be a collapse of liberalism and pragmatism in America? Rorty gives clear indication that neither "democratic freedom nor philosophical pluralism will survive the next century," and "for very few unexpurgated libraries may exist then, and very few people may ever have heard of Mill, Nietzsche, James and Dewey, anymore than of free trade nations, a free press and democratic elections."⁶⁵ We may note again Rorty is a atheist of relativistic means discarding the metaphysical for a liberal utopia that is a classless and casteless society where injustice is eradicated.

The ironic perspective of the human condition is valuable, but it cannot advance Liberalism's social and political goals. In fact, Rorty promotes literature above

⁶⁵ See: looking back from the year 1086. Ibid.

philosophy and includes among his cultural heroes⁶⁶ novelists Orwell and Nabokov whom were able to awaken us to the cruelty of particular social practices and individual attitudes rather than formulating philosophical argumentation.⁶⁷

The utopian world of Rortyan society and its ironist incumbent citizens are justified without reference to God or nature, but through a progressively pragmatic type of philosophic history. Theirs is the hope that things will get better, freer, less cruel, more leisured, and richer in goods and experiences. But from the Rortyan narrative gleaned from history, it does not follow that things are getting better and our historical past is filled with misery, tyranny, and chaos.⁶⁸ Rorty adds to the list “empty contingency,” that is, if we are lucky, we will find a common loving solidarity to end cruelty. Thus the Rortyan premise that underlies his approach to life is that every point of view and way of life is culturally conditioned, or if you will, “tribal,” and, as such, should be taken a bit less seriously.

A Christian Response

How may we respond to the premise above if life is considered whimsical? Rorty would answer contingency is born upon skillful imagination combined with intellectual narrative whereby solidarity will be established by virtue of overcoming cruelty. But the intellect and imagination are stifled when the meaning of life is belittled to a

⁶⁶ The strong poet, revolutionary who recognize that it is what is, has the morality it has, speaks the language it does, not because it approximates the will of God or the nature of man but because certain poets and revolutionaries of the past spoke as they did. *Ibid.*, 61.

⁶⁷ Orwell’s greatness lies in his uncanny ability to describe much of the politics of the twentieth century. Nabokov’s best novels, according to Rorty, are those “which exhibit his inability to believe his own general ideas,” and this makes him very interesting. *Ibid.*, 168.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 86, 93.

common pool of uncertain values, and narrative as an expression of whimsicality will not diminish cruelty produce a common nationalism.

The metaphysician may claim Rorty's heroes of narrative though liberal and pragmatic wrote from contingencies of the modern era the same era Rorty wishes to eliminate or reconstruct. He is unable to explain how imagination, intellect, and narrative will motivate ironists, poets, and revolutionaries when life is contingent upon hope having little substance. Furthermore and perhaps most interesting Rorty seems more critical toward academic philosophy and although he disregards metaphysics he fails to give attention to established Christian doctrine, community, or message as a reasonable societal model.

The Character of Citizenship

The Character of the Rortyan utopian purpose is to remove old patterns of thinking and develop new patterns of speaking well. But to what extent must the ironist become removed – from the primary truths of reason itself?

The Christian agrees that the human is conscious of thought, feelings, and the act of the will which is part of the universal faith of humanity. We are aware that things are constantly in flux, but there is something of self which remains unchanged and unchangeable borrowing from the outward and visible world all the terms by which we express our mental acts and identity.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ We must be wary when speaking of narrative or narrative theology. Narrative theology is relatively a new undeveloped movement. Narrative theologians have yet to articulate fully the understanding of God's relation to the world and underlining their approach ... It is not a universal solvent for all theological problems or disagreements etc. Narrative theology looks for the transcendence of God within the story of the community of faith. Whether or not the

Narrative and identity development are necessary in the formation and articulation of personal identity. The development of the individual pertains to persistence but also the quality of character emerging within the individual. The quality of individual is based on historical and social data. The historical analysis is based on memory; the social is based upon interpreting the significance of the whole as one's identity all of which becomes the social context of tradition.

We must argue then that one's personal identity cannot be both privatized in one sphere and public in another as Rorty wishes. To do so would cripple personal expression and deprive the culture of its unique character both historically and socially, because culture is the expression of unique personalities. Rorty's model society if not tribal is "cultic totalitarianism" whereby individuals must adhere to a form of social justice expressed through a contingent pragmatic network of socially expressed needs.

Rorty offers a dangerous proposition to escape from or to reinterpret one's past or tradition depersonalize one's past, bruise one's identity, and prioritize self deception as a means of escaping responsibility. It establishes the fact that experiences of one's personal history are meaningless, for without the interpretive context life lacks a plot. Hence, it is the interpretation that makes a personal narrative "history" and consequently gives rise to personal identity. Furthermore to deny personal narrative is to become incoherent with the way one lives in relation to the past and in anticipation of the future.

eternal truth of the transcendent God can emerge from the competing religious narratives found within the human story remains a yet unanswered question. Stanley J. Grenz & Roger E. Olson, *20th Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age*, (Ill: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 282-283.

Reminiscent of the response of the fallen Adam and Eve to God in the Genesis story, self-deception entails a discrepancy between how a person live sin the world and the narrative he or she offers to others.⁷⁰

Rorty is not doing society a great favor when he asks us to deceive ourselves and thus change community by reinterpreting thoughts and forgetting tradition. As a result he damages personal identity the practice of responsibility and seeks to rewrite the script for the future.

A Community of Faith

The importance of community is not necessarily individual story-telling but the community articulating its story. The Christian community appeals to the biblical narratives just as Rorty's narrative expresses the American pragmatic writers of James and Dewey. This is a community whereby individuals tell their story and their history. Rorty reinterprets the narrative of pragmatism, the Christian community the story of a common past, understanding definitive events and present shared hopes for the future.

As Rorty has lost faith in traditional philosophy he anchors his hope in pragmatism and articulates its destiny to eradicate cruelty. He believes community can be built upon the premise of telling different stories which lead to crisis experience within a collision of narratives. The Christian calls this conversion and tells the glorious stories of changed lives while Rortyan narrative is subject to none.

The Christian community has never loses its faith in the Transcendent God draws upon biblical narrative answering the question of Jesus identity - the hope of the world, the meaning of discipleship, and the establishment of doctrinal discourse. The Christian community offers well-developed biblical history, history of interpretation of

⁷⁰ Ibid., 285.

Scripture, and boasts (humbly) of the greatest record of unparalleled truth. Rorty's passion parallels the Christian community's quest to oppose evil, but where Rorty fails to distinguish between human nature as evil and the act of evil while the church stands in the pathway of wickedness bearing personal and biblical testimony bearing witness to the nature of God in the present through resources of revelation past.

Rorty offers hope on a human scale, the Christian offers hope on a glorious transcendent one. Rortyan hope is contingent, the Christian hope is certain. Rorty's believes history can be reinterpreted, and the Christian believes history tells the eventful story of sovereign God over history.

CHAPTER THREE

SMOLDERING RUINS OF AN ANCIENT FAITH

Many a man's knowledge is a torch to light him to hell. Thou who hast knowledge of God's will, but doth not do it, wherein dost thou excel the devil, who transforms himself into an angel of light.¹

What is the mood of the church today? Has Richard Rorty and secular society recognized something missing within Christendom that the Church has neglected to its own peril? We will take a closer look at the pulse of the Church in our world today.

A PORTRAIT OF CHRISTENDOM

One need not go far before finding criticism knocking at the door of the evangelical church. Criticism is probably the most popular linguistic construct of communication aimed at evangelicals. Furthermore criticism is no respecter of persons having its conservative and liberal factions.

Liberal theorists such as Richard Rorty admit that over fifty years the church offered little to restore the sagging foundations of democracy let alone quelling its own disputes. He refutes the legitimacy of Christianity claiming there is little difference between the lifestyle of the Christian and the world they seek to save and questions their lack of zeal or boldness by which they have committed to believe.

¹ Very little is known of Puritan preacher Thomas Watson although he was admired by the famed Charles Spurgeon who compiled his memoirs. Spurgeon writes "perhaps his writings are his best memorial." But Spurgeon also recognized one of Watson's greatest gifts was prayer and records of individuals who were captivated by his prayers following his lectures. Charles Spurgeon, *A Memoir of Thomas Watson*; Compiled by Charles Spurgeon, (Fire and Ice Puritan and Reformed Writings, [on-line] available from: <http://www.puritans-sermons.com/previous.htm>)

As a proponent of existential claims against religion more specifically Christianity he believes the Bible to be unreliable² and questions the transformative evidence of Christian message:

The failed prophecies of the Bible make it invaluable inspirational reading... its predictions have, so far, been ludicrous flops, ... Christ did not return ... nobody can prove the second coming will not occur, thus producing empirical evidence for the Incarnation ... but we have been waiting a long time.³

No scoffer can be sure that what evangelical Christians call becoming a New Being in Christ Jesus is not a genuinely transformative, miraculous experience. But those who claim to have been reborn in this way do not seem to behave as differently from the way they behaved in the past as we had hoped. We have been waiting a long time for prosperous Christians to behave more decently than prosperous pagans.⁴

From the Rortyan vantage point the church may have secular value in its appeal to discriminate against societal evil but its absolute truth claims are untenable. How can someone become a believer in the Christian message and commit to a lifestyle whose outward behavior expresses an inner attitude of insincerity. Though Rortyan views are not a boon to Christianity there is no doubt that he seeks legitimacy from a people who claim their creator and savior is sovereign of the universe.

² Many passages in the Gospels have suggested to slave owners that they can keep right on lashing their slaves, and to rich people that they can keep right on starving the poor. For they are going to Heaven anyway, their sins have been forgiven as a result of having accepted Christ as Lord. It would be best to find a new document to provide our children with inspiration and hope - one which was free of the defects of the New Testament as those of the Manifesto. Rorty, *PSH*, 208.

³ Ibid., 202.

⁴ Ibid.

Rorty may view Christianity as smoldering ruins of an ancient faith or the church as a defrocked religion providing little relevance for the present and in the need of reformation.

The secular attitude toward Christianity is similar to Rorty's that Christians are restrained, up-tight, and repressed-unable to answer serious questions that require serious answers such as: what is the purpose or meaning of life, when I die will I go to heaven, or what is Christianity about (that is, other than church musical productions and food used as marketing devices to attract the unchurched). In the past churches held revival meetings to attract community participation. Today revival is replaced with marketing devices and advertisements.

Millions stay away because they cannot make the value equation work ... When they calculate the amount of time, money and energy they would have to invest in a church, they do not see a reasonable return on the investment. Most of the unchurched figure they've gotten along just fine without the church for a long time and until someone gives them reason to feel otherwise, they will remain spiritually unattached ... others cannot stand religious television stating "people whose brain still work watch television like this and think: If these people represent God, God must be a real idiot."⁵

What is the mood of the church today? Has Rorty and secular society recognized something missing within Christendom that the Church has neglected to its own peril?

⁵ Charisma, a 215,000-circulation Florida-based magazine that chronicles charismatic and Pentecostal Christian trends, devoted its April 2,000 cover story to why people are turned off by church. "[We] found in a series of interviews with average non-churchgoers across the country a great many who consider they're spiritual or religious [and] have little or no time for church or the people who go there." Julia Dunn, Americans Keep Faith, Lose Religion: The Fact that the Majority of Americans Aren't in Church Can Be Seen in the Sunday Traffic Jams at Malls, Movie Theaters and Grocery Stores, *Insight on the News*, (27 May 2002), 30.

We will take a closer look at the pulse of the Church and how it affects our world today.

A Heart Condition: Christian Biorhythms in a Postmodernist Age

Many pastors and scholars are concerned about the state of the Christian church and are asking questions regarding the survival of the church in a society becoming increasingly secularized.

From the pastoral point of view they are the recipients of societal development and its impact upon the spiritual and moral condition of their congregants. Yet too often the pastor is either under-equipped or does not have time to dwell on questions regarding congregational growth or decline. They are then left to assume many societal myths as a means to answer questions pertaining to lack of commitment, tithing, and the inability to evangelize the community.

The majority of evangelical pastors today are engaged in serving either declining or plateaued congregations, though perhaps better off than some mainline churches having lost congregants in the millions over the past three decades from trying to adjust their beliefs and practices to the temper of modernity.

Although most growth gains are recognized in emerging mega-churches, as for others “pastors are facing aging congregations and entire segments of the population men, singles, empty nesters ... and people who were raised in mainline Protestant churches.”⁶ Telephone surveys (1991 - 1995) of 1,004 adults 18 and over indicate regular church attendance declined between 2 – 3 percent per year. Others state

⁶ Christian Century magazine writes that over the past ten years *Church attendance is on the decline. Attendance on the Decline*, The Christian Century, Fall 1996, 843.

according to studies of phone surveys show that actual church attendance is only about half of that indicated.

Researchers state that 78 million “marginal” Protestants claim a traditional religious identity but are not active in churches:

There are really very few people who do not identify with anything ... They're still saying `I'm a Baptist'--but they don't belong to a local church and they don't go ... Young People are confused about morals and not familiar with religious tradition, and the global youth culture has become pluralistic and relativistic ... (and there are very few if any doing much to help them sort it out) ... and the reserves of religious tradition are dwindling.⁷

What clergy face today is a deadly spiritual epidemic spreading across America.

The following are indications of plague like symptoms indwelling the Church.

Congregational Decline

While ministers are experiencing congregational decline they are also receiving confused and contradictory messages regarding spiritual formation – a national dilemma.

Studies conducted during 2003 of 10,000 personal interviews indicate that 84% of adults claim that religion is a valued part of their lives, 66% say that religion is losing influence in the nation. Yet while individuals are spending less time in Bible study, prayer, and religious activity 70% reveal that their faith is progressively developing.⁸

⁷ The U.S. may be following many other secular nations in becoming a society without rigorous systems of religious education in which churches, temples and mosques serve as moral training grounds. "It's a valuable tool for moral and ethical training," Marler warning that a relativistic youth culture, without a core ethical tradition, could make for a troublesome society, she added: "I'm not sure what kind of person it would form. We've never tried it." Ibid.

⁸ Spiritual Progress is hard to Find, Ventura, Barna Research Group, 22 December 2003;<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=155>

We also find that of the same 84% of adult (those 18 years and older) Christians, three out of four say they are either absolutely or somewhat committed to Christianity, and three-fifths state they believe the Bible is fully accurate in its teaching.⁹

Confused Moral Values

It is not unusual to find ministers today experiencing declining churches or indication of confused spiritual concepts but also confusion regarding moral insight. The above study indicates during the same year there were increases in the proportions of people who assert that cohabitation (60%), adultery (42%), sexual relations between homosexuals (30%), abortion (45%), pornography (38%), use of profanity (36%), and gambling (61%) are behaviorally acceptable choices of Christians. Further evidence shows at least three out of ten born again adults believe co-habitation, gay sex, sexual fantasies, breaking the speed limit, or watching sexually-explicit movies are morally acceptable behaviors.¹⁰

America is confused about what a moral life should look like – much less how to make ethical decisions or how to define moral standards. Furthermore it is difficult for individuals to make decisions regarding right and wrong. Nearly half of all Baby Boomers (those born between 1940 and 1960) “view moral truth as absolute, but only three out of 10 individuals born between 1961 and 1981 (known as the Baby Buster Generation) embrace the concept of absolute truth.” And when it comes to ethics the new generations of adults bend the rules to fit their own personal agendas. The morals of nearly half believe that such principles are based on “what is right for the person.”

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Thus such information helps us to understand why Busters are more pragmatic in orientation when it comes to making decisions and ethical choices – there are no absolute standards making choices and choices are determined upon what is right for them.

Some professors are now discovering is that the relativistic mode of thought has so successfully transmitted itself to student that they are prepared to do what their elders have prudently refrained from doing ... students abhor the Holocaust ... but cannot bring themselves to condemn it ... as morally wrong.¹¹

It is logical to assume that moral experimentation is generally a choice of youth, but the Buster generation is more likely to verbalize their choices and results: such as in the past month they experimented with illegal drugs or had gotten drunk. Yet on a deeper note young adults are more expressive than the pre-Buster age, twice as likely to use profanity in public, to talk behind others back, slander, even the score, steal, or physically fight or abuse someone.¹²

Congregational decline and pragmatic moral practices of non-churched youths may be an indication of weak parental guidance but also a challenging environment for

¹¹ Students make similar observations about apartheid, slavery, and ethnic cleansing. To pass judgment, they fear, is to be a moral “absolutist,” and having been taught that there are no absolutes, they now see any judgment as arbitrary, intolerant, and authoritarian. Himmelfarb, *One Nation, Two Cultures*, 122-123.

¹² The lifestyles of young and old were indistinguishable in a few ways. Out of the 16 areas of moral behavior, adults across the generations were equally likely to have given someone “the finger” while driving, to smoke, to buy a lottery ticket, and to place a bet or gamble. Busters’ perspectives were no different from that of their elders on three issues: the acceptability of abortion, allowing the “f-word” on broadcast television, and deeming divorce not to be a sin. *A New Generation of Adults Bends Moral and Sexual Rules to Their Liking*, Ventura, 31 October, 1006. [Resource Online] <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=-BarnaUpdateID=249>

a Church that has lost its voice. But we also find that congregations have become soft toward basic tenants of faith.

Apathetic toward Tenants of faith

The work above indicates confused spiritual conditions and moral indiscretion, but also an indifference to basic doctrine and beliefs.

A 1994 report states indicators of concern regarding the downswing of conservative affirmation for faith collected by a telephone survey of 1,203 adults in 1993 and 1,206 adults in 1994. Approximately 95% of Americans believe in God or a transcendent force, but 67% of those polled believed in an Absolute God, meaning an all-powerful, all-knowing Creator of the universe who rules the world today. Research indicates that while 73% agreed with that definition in 1992, 72% believed “there is no such thing as absolute truth,” compared to 67% who agreed with that statement in 1991.¹³

Previous research shows a significant trend toward a diverse and inclusive spirituality, meaning many individuals who once held orthodox (Christian) views in the past are embracing a much broader set of beliefs or “a diverse inclusive spirituality.”¹⁴

Our 2003 report (above) indicates almost nine out of ten Protestant churches claim to be “evangelical,” almost six out of ten “born again” Christians claim they have shared their faith with a non-believer during the last twelve months, and every Christian church follows the task of evangelism (the Great Commission). Yet while

¹³ *Evangelical Beliefs on Decline*, Pollster Says, The Christian Century, 14 December 1994, 1185.

¹⁴ Ibid.

38% of adults have confessed their sins and accepted Christ as their savior, 99% claim they will not go to Hell after they die. In fact, a majority of Americans do not believe that Satan exists and most adults are leery about the existence of Hell.¹⁵

Commitment Concerns

While confusion and skepticism is an emergent symptom of a morally decaying culture, lack of commitment follows in its wake.

A 2006 study shows that more than 72% of individuals having made a personal commitment to Christ find that pledge a necessary part of their lives. While only one third of Evangelicals/born again Christian adults embrace the idea of a developmental faith as a consequent involvement in the community of faith. Thus there remains an inconsistency in how Christians understand commitment.

The analysis of Church commitment includes a subgroup showing the greatest loyalists are revolutionaries – those endorsing spiritual growth through community, although the study ironically states the same group is accused of remaining outside community in order grow in the faith. Furthermore adults who possess a biblical worldview were twice as likely as those without it to acknowledge the necessity of a nurturing community of faith. Nevertheless, only one-third of those who view life through a biblical lens embrace the necessity of growth in the company of other believers.

¹⁵ America's spiritual confusion undoubtedly relates to the fact that most people own a Bible but few know what's in it. Research showing that only 4% of adults and just 9% of born again Christians, have a biblical worldview sheds light on the distorted viewpoints that reign in the U.S. Spiritual Progress is hard to find.

One snippet of interest revolving around our study of Rorty and his passion to understand the motivational catalyst that propels individuals to change lives, that is 44% of evangelicals strongly affirm this characteristic. While it is logical to understand such commitment is generally found in older individuals: one third of those under 40, half the Baby Boomers, and nearly three out of five people 60 or older are devoted to this process. Revolutionaries 59% and evangelicals 57% led the field among the religious segments studied. In comparison barely one out of four atheists and agnostics 27% were committed to improving the world. Thus Rorty is a one of the select few agnostic atheists passionate about changing their world while his major literary contributions were written between the ages of 48 and 67 years of age. Rorty is now 76.¹⁶

We have hoped to supply basic evidence that American Christendom is indeed struggling for its spiritual existence. As a cultural counter puncher its presence is softening. One cannot speculate its influential future by utilizing a contingent value system of empty hope as Rorty prescribes, that is contingent upon, deconstruction of linguistically historic values to enhance freedom of expression and reestablish a means

¹⁶ "Americans are willing to expend some energy in religious activities such as attending church and reading the Bible, and they are willing to throw some money in the offering basket. Because of such activities, they convince themselves that they are people of genuine faith. But when it comes time to truly establishing their priorities and making a tangible commitment to knowing and loving God, and to allowing Him to change their character and lifestyle, most people stop short. We want to be 'spiritual' and we want to have God's favor, but we're not sure we want Him taking control of our lives and messing with the image and outcomes we've worked so hard to produce." *Christians Have Commitment Issues*, New Survey Shows, (Ventura, Barna Research Group, 18, April, 2006). Available form: <http://www.barna.org/Flex-Page.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=235>

of liberty and solidarity. The Christian hope must be validated and secured by truth lest evangelicals continue shrinking in the ranks.¹⁷

We now take a deeper look at the mindset of Christianity and how it is affected by pragmatist philosophy in a secular age.

AMERICAN SECULARISM AND CHRISTIANITY

The state of the church above provides insight into a larger more aggressive portfolio of secularism facing Christianity. Postmodern secularism, or if you will Rortyan pragmatism promotes an agenda of politically correct values combined with secular myth such as success: “having all the toys,” “wealth,” “fame.” But how might Rorty describe the term secularism?

Rorty would agree with the following definition of secularism in its broader context:

Secularism is a code of duty pertaining to this life, founded on considerations purely human, and intended mainly for those who find theology indefinite or inadequate, unreliable or unbelievable. Its essential principles are three: (1) Improvement of this life by material means. (2) That science is the available Providence of man. (3) That it is good to do good. Whether there be other good or not, the good of the present life is good, and it is good to seek that good.¹⁸

¹⁷ "The movement of the data suggests that we may see a continued shrinkage of the ranks of evangelicals in the immediate future, short of a miraculous outpouring of God's Spirit upon the people of our land," *Evangelical Beliefs on Decline*, Pollster says, 1185.

¹⁸ Secularism should not be confused with secularization (A philosophical and political movement that promotes the idea that society benefits by being less religious) Whereby the concept of secularism a moderate form asserts (freedom of religion and freedom from the government imposition of religion upon the people, within a state that is neutral on matters of belief, and gives no state privileges or subsidies to religions, i.e. separation of church and state.

Rorty argues for secular reasoning as “civic virtue” which demonstrates respect for religious pluralism or “romantic polytheism.” Rorty hopes romantic polytheism will come to serve America as a new religious center dispensing with theism altogether and has changed prior beliefs in agreement with Michael Sandel that it will never be possible to separate morality and religion entirely, since doing so “generates its own disenchantment.” Key to Rortyan solidarity is the concept that the social order may better promote a freer robust exercise of religious tradition in a romantic polytheistic democracy by promoting “new moralities and new religions.”¹⁹

As we have seen Rorty has altered his thoughts from earlier predictions that religion would some day wither away. He has now returned to a more central pragmatic view that secularism consists of living the good life not consisting of a public life dredged of moral significance and shared purpose. But do not be mistaken, Rorty has not turned a conservative ear toward religion especially Christianity for him it is still a “conversation stopper”²⁰ and he continues steadfast in his concept that

Secularism, Wikipedia Encyclopedia, (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.[online] available from: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secularization>

¹⁹ Rorty offers social solidarity that can take the place of a “communion of saints” in the form of a democratic community, “a community in which everybody thinks that it is human solidarity, rather than knowledge of something not merely human, that really matters. The actually existing approximations to such a fully democratic, fully secular community now seem to me the greatest achievements of our species.” In exchange for giving up religion’s promise of reconciliation with Truth or God, pragmatists-as-romantic-polytheists are energized toward social action in their existing, temporal, human community. Boffetti, *How Richard Rorty Found Religion*.

²⁰ Unlike Stout who wants to enhance commitment to other traditions with the hope that religious argument, not private confession, built on the basis of premises and modes of reasoning will greatly motivate individual language that may be persuasive to their interlocutors since civility in a democratic society, includes a willingness to offer reasons to the other that are relevant from their point of view. Rorty, PSH, 168-174. For an exemplary debate of the issues, see Robert Audi and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square: The Place of Religious Convictions in Political Debate* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997); Stanley Hauerwas, *The Democratic Policing of Christianity, in Dispatches from the*

religious argument remain private and irrelevant for the betterment of moral democratic institutions.²¹ Hence for the time being Rorty relinquishes his consideration for a “thoroughgoing secularism” but continues to press religion as a private matter hoping with the true apostles John Dewey and Walt Whitman that America is the New Jerusalem progressing toward Liberty:

Breaking the traditional link between the religious impulse ... stand in awe of something greater than oneself, (solidarity) ... the infantile need for security ... the childish hope of escaping from time and chance ... hoping for a utopian America to replace God as the unconditional object of desire ... and the struggle for social justice (he calls religion) to be the country’s animating principle, the nation’s soul.²²

It seems ironic Rorty’s dream utopian society consisting of pragmatic subjectivism and hope-filled contingencies in a thoroughgoing secularism without metaphysical content has returned full circle to embrace romantic polytheism and thus

Front: Theological Engagements with the Secular (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994), 91-106.

²¹ It was Rorty's attempt to show that, unless we are "lucky Christians" who effortlessly join love of God with love of neighbor, or are revolutionaries passionately devoted to social justice, our moral responsibility to others and our private and idiosyncratic loves "need not coincide, and one should not try too hard to make them do so." If, unable to accept our finitude, we try to combine them, we will tend, once persuasion fails, to force our idiosyncratic loves on others. Rorty would make one last fateful choice for the future direction of his political philosophy. He would follow Dewey and the American pragmatists in defending liberal democracy, rather than joining what Rorty calls the "bad side" of Nietzsche and of contemporary postmodernists who attacked it. But in his zeal to embrace American pragmatism and democracy, Rorty has adopted--perhaps inadvertently at first, but now more intentionally--a new religious faith that gives him the unified picture of the universe he has always longed for. Rorty has come to accept that all competing worldviews are ultimately competing commitments to some orienting faith, and that no conflict between worldviews can be resolved by an appeal to reason or objective standards of truth. At their core, all worldviews require faith and hope. Boffetti, *How Richard Rorty Found Religion*, 56.

²² Rorty, *CIS*, 20 - 35

a new religion²³ More so considering the similarity of his civil religion in correlation with his maternal grandfathers Social Gospel Movement of Rauschenbusch except stripped of God and its attendant theological baggage Rorty's faith in pragmatism and the necessary means of re-description finds pragmatism and religion compatible.²⁴

Thus we find Rorty's civil religion poised toward social justice in continuity with the Social Gospel Movement of his maternal grandfathers except stripped of God and its attendant if you will theological baggage. To offer a glimpse of Rorty's distaste for religion and apparent misgivings toward religious language, Reinhold Niebuhr, among others, did not think the theological baggage of the Social Gospel Movement was that weighty. Although his brother H. Richard Niebuhr famously described the creed of liberal Protestantism:

A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.²⁵

We have discovered American secularism and Rortyan romantic polytheism offer society a religious diversity to replace the absolutism of Christian monotheism especially to hinder its influence at the political level. Furthermore Rorty's ironic consideration of religion as a necessary tool to establish "the good" which secularism

²³ This idea of romantic polytheism is not a wholesale rejection of his arguments in his book "Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity," in which he claimed that one's private projects of self-creation cannot harmonize and should not be made to harmonize with common public purposes. But romantic polytheism holds out the promise that this supposedly unacceptable fusion between public and private projects might be carried out without negative social consequences. Boffetti, *How Richard Rorty Found Religion*.

²⁴ Whether or not one agrees with the earlier Rorty that metaphysics can be dispensed with entirely in the political sphere, the later Rorty has dearly brought metaphysics back into public discussion. He insists on a "fact of the matter" about the nature of our universe and our place in it--that there is no God and that all we have is one another and he seeks to establish, in patently religious terms, a public-spiritedness that comports with this "fact." Ibid.

²⁵ Richard J. Neuhaus, *Three Constellations of America*, First Things: March 2001: 71.

insists for the betterment of society especially when Rorty's intent was to develop a "through going" secularism serving the advancement of humankind rather than another being. But one cannot tell if Rorty realizes his newly created religion, though progressive and polytheistic, demands answers to metaphysical questions such as why we are here and what the purpose of life is.

The course we have chosen here attempts to question the possibility of recognizing Rortyan pragmatic orientation within Christendom and should we be concerned.

American Christianity

What is happening in the evangelical world when highly regarded evangelicals write books such as: "No Place for Truth;"²⁶ "A Passion for Truth;"²⁷ The Gagging of God;²⁸ or "Christianity in Crisis?"²⁹

Between 1960 and 1976 Evangelical seminaries grew large and numerous, churches engaged large segments of the secular culture. Newsweek magazine called the year of the 1976 "the year of the evangelical," From 1968 to 1980 mainline churches were on the decline because of their close identification with secular trends.³⁰

²⁶ David Wells, *No Place for Truth: Or whatever happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993).

²⁷ Alister McGrath, *Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996).

²⁸ D. A. Carson, *Gagging of God*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996).

²⁹ Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis*, (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1993)

³⁰ Note: What is to blame for the confused moral state of contemporary America, and in particular for everything summed up by the phrase, "the permissive society" In a way, as Himmelfarb says, it is capitalism. The roots of the phenomenon lie not in the 1960s, when the shoots appeared above the surface, but in the 1950s, the supposedly stuffy Eisenhower years when American capitalism really went to work to create a consumer society. A century earlier, John Stuart Mill had warned that a "progressive economy" was conducive to materialism and

Perhaps for the first time in the nation's history, religious opinion is just that, an opinion that does not inhibit society as a whole. Christians have become anesthetized by a "disneyfiction," absorbed by the arts and tricks of marketing and simply not very serious anymore. Some view the coming of the "mega church phenomenon" as a pandering to "seekers" who are in search for vague spiritual uplifts - subjectivism, without concern for truth and real discipleship.

Perhaps for the first time Western Christian perceptions of traditional ecclesiastical architecture is out of style with the times, perhaps offensive, that religious emblems such as crosses should be banned from churches, pulpits abandoned, hymns abolished, pews done away with, pianos and organs removed. Rather than being more likely to have a fear of God churchgoers would rather have their buildings to represent corporate headquarters or country clubs. Nevertheless, all of which has been happening at the forefront of the postmodern advance upon Western society.³¹

It would seem relativism has taken its toll upon the Christian West resulting in little respect for doctrinal truths, and rather than being "the called out of the world" to worship God Western Christendom is tumbling toward an anthropocentric (man

hedonism. In order to restrain this process, Mill wanted to keep the economy in "a stationary state." Much closer to our time, the Austrian-born American economist Joseph Schumpeter argued that capitalism, being simultaneously creative of wealth and destructive of society, would destroy itself, too, in the end. He was wrong about that, but right about capitalism's propensities. As Daniel Bell pointed out 25 years ago, capitalism contains cultural contradictions: it demands self-discipline and deferred satisfaction in order to function at all, but in the process of expanding stimulates a self-indulgence that is impatient of all restraints. *Himmelfarb, One Nation, Two Cultures*, 11-15.

³¹ The panders claim to be winning souls for Christ, but in fact the number of "born again" Christians is static. They are really engaged in niche marketing by selling spiritual entertainment that, by comparison entertainment that, by comparison, makes Bonhoeffer's "cheap grace" looks like the way of the Cross. *Richard J. Neuhaus, While We're at it, First things*: March 2006: 64.

centered) rather than a Theo centric (God centered) worldview. Furthermore evangelicals are divided between those practicing a “classical” spirituality derived from earlier Protestant and Puritan traditions, and those partial to a postmodern or existential spirituality, which is therapeutic and individualist.

The Chocolate Swirl Variety

One favorite treat on a hot day is Chocolate Swirl ice cream. It’s the combination of soft chocolate and vanilla ice cream swirled together, it is attractive to the eye, tasty to the palate, smooth and cool going down. It offers a totally positive experience except on occasion a few drops may find its way to the shoe, but that can be easily wiped off.

Western Christianity is like Chocolate Swirl ice cream for it to be a desired commodity and successful it must first meet capitalistic standards to meet demand. Thus it asks the following queries: Is it marketable, attractive, will it leave a good taste in the shoppers mouth, in an atmosphere void of traditional memorabilia (crosses, pulpits etc.) leaving no mark (spiritual impact) on the attendee and keeps them coming back. It allows for pragmatic ideas for new tastes that may be marketable. As the guru’s of church growth marketing would say you can take it to the bank.³²

³² Donald McGavran’s principle of church growth began when he was a missionary to India during the 1930’s. Later his views were expressed at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena California where individuals such as Arthur Glasser, Peter Wagner, Alan Tippet, Charles Craft, and Paul Hiebert became the catalyst for the church growth enterprise. “A Survey taken in 1991 reported that 86 percent of the pastors who read leadership magazine had heard of the Church Growth Movement and that most were positive toward it. Only four percent thought that Church Growth methods should not be used, whereas 86 percent thought that they should be used because these methods were effective. Among the respondents, 45 percent indicated that their minds had been changed on this matter, that initial doubt had given

Often the Church evaluates success in terms of building size, program, attendance, and giving, doing little to examine individual spiritual development. Perhaps discipleship is too costly and too time consuming, or the church does not have the volunteers to do the work properly. But a church that looks to volunteerism is not a spiritually healthy church. Nevertheless is the evangelical church following what Francis Schaffer termed the gospel of personal peace and affluence?" But then Rorty's message strikes a cord. What of a world that is floundering in hunger, racism, injustice, and moral decay, will a gospel of happiness and prosperity suffice them?

The church does well to examine individual spiritual advancement. Churches that have the greatest success are those seeing young people emerge into mature Christians, rather than contented church goers, are those that facilitate a parent-church partnership focused on instilling specific beliefs and practices in a child's life from an early age.

Chocolate-swirl Christianity produces exactly what it is meant to; it formulates soft Christianity conducive to a cornucopia of behavioral lifestyles, pleasurable experiences, and beliefs. One need not search long before finding secular church growth principles in most churches of America.

Soft Christianity

Soft Christianity has bought into the same delusion as mainline churches of the past which have lost thousands if not millions of congregants to ice cream parlor Christianity better known as the late liberalist "social gospel."

way to more positive attitude. David F. Wells, *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams*, (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), 68-69.

Church Growth principles had made an impact during the 1970s, because there was already a decline in the theological character of evangelicalism, leaving the churches wide open to the intrusions of raw pragmatism. As theology moved from the center to the periphery of evangelical faith, technique moved from the periphery to the center. Ibid., 71.

Today churches are desperately trying anything to gain congregants and tempted to follow in the steps of mega-church design. But church growth and mega-church theory assume the pragmatically contingent motto “if it works for Joel Osteen, Peter Wagner, or Bill Hybels it will work for me.” But adherents will more likely than not gain heartache and frustration rather than fairy tale experiences of fame and success, and so we are prodded to take a closer look at the growing narrative through the stain glass windows of the ice cream parlor.

Deception of ice cream parlor Churches

First our intension is not to demean church growth theory, but to be informative enough to grasp characteristics that often follow mega-church strategy and has become common place in most churches of the West.

Many ice cream parlor churches have bought into the secular myth of capitalism, meaning success, (impressive achievement, fame, wealth, or power, a standard for individual recognition), the same system Rorty confesses must be removed lest the poor continue to be oppressed. Himmelfarb is also concerned for the grave consequences of an unchecked capitalistic system that may lead to heathenism. Nevertheless the point being made is Christians are playing with spiritual dynamite when capitalistic means can corrupt rather than redeem.³³

³³ Although Herbert Hoover (1929-1933) promised “two cars in every garage” he gave us the Great Depression. The phenomenon of the capitalistic system lay dormant until the Dwight D. Eisenhower years (1953-1961) when American capitalism began to create a consumer society, by the 1960s its roots began to surface as a force to be reckoned with. Unrestrained Capitalism stifles virtues of frugality.

The strength of capitalism is that it is continually transforming itself, absorbing lessons, overcoming difficulties, and setting ever-more ambitious objectives. But in so doing, it reflects a human dynamism that is destructive of the status quo in every field of activity--politics, religion, morals, and values no less than economic arrangements. The same dynamic pursuit of

One of the most popular and controversial ice cream parlor churches on the cutting edge of mega church design is Lakewood Church of Houston pastored by Joel Osteen, a second generation prosperity teacher whose church is arguably the third largest in the United States, a church Osteen believes will grow to 100,000 in the near future, and according to Charisma Magazine. Osteen's show is seen in more than 90% of American households and is number one in the Nielsen ratings for inspirational programming.³⁴

But does God want us to be rich, according to one of Osteen's attendees He does.

George Adams writes:

God has shown me that he doesn't want me to be a run-of-the-mill person ... right now I am above average ... and on my way to six figure income ... will buy my dream house (because I hate renting) and more. Adams states he is: dreaming big-because all of heaven is dreaming big ... Jesus died for our sins. That was the best gift God could give us, but we have something else. Because I want to follow Jesus and he wants to support us (Joel Osteen's ministry told him) why would an awesome and mighty God want anything less for his children? Thus why not gain the whole world plus my soul?³⁵

"progress" transformed medieval art into the art of Raphael, Michelangelo, and Leonardo, and then in due course destroyed the culture of high art in the early 20th century. A religious Great Awakening will be followed by an equally feverish and determined pursuit of sensual satisfaction, in the next generation or the one after. Paul Johnson, *One Nation, Two Cultures: A Moral Divide*, Commentary, January 2000, 66.

³⁴ Rorty shares his story that he ultimately did not wish to become involved in preaching until he spoke for his father on what was the last Sunday of his father's life. He says "I spoke for him that Sunday for the first time in my life," he says. "I just got up there and told stories. I was so glad when it was over. I said, 'I'll never do this again in my life.' Well, that was the last Sunday of my dad's life." *How a Big Church Grew Bigger*, Charisma Magazine, June 2004.

³⁵ David Van Biema, Jeff Chu, *Does God want you to be Rich*, Time Magazine, 10 September, 2006, 1-8.

When Osteen was questioned “Does God want us to be rich” Osteen denied that God wants everyone to be a millionaire, but to be materially prosperous and happy. Besides says Osteen “its all relative isn’t it?”³⁶

Other voices contend the prosperity gospel of Osteen and others has sold out Christ’s true message and discounted its rewards. Jesus spent more time among the poor than the rich. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warns, “Don’t lay up for yourselves treasures on earth ... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” Note Jesus encounter with the “rich young ruler” who cannot begin to part with his money, after which Jesus famously comments, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”³⁷

Disciples of ice-cream parlor churches have the tendency to show a greater lack of reverence and concern for anyone.³⁸ Jesus never contended his message to grant all our wants. Instead he asks how we may best to serve His Kingdom. It is apparent the gospel of want is a gospel of another kingdom whose idol is wealth. The challenge facing the Christian faith as always has been a powerful understructure of societal

³⁶ Rich Warren finds the very basis of Prosperity laughable: This idea that God wants everybody to be wealthy?” he snorts. “There is a word for that: baloney. It’s creating a false idol. You don’t measure your self-worth by your net worth. I can show you millions of faithful followers of Christ who live in poverty. Why isn’t everyone in the church a millionaire?” Ibid.

³⁷ In three of the Gospels, Jesus warns that each of his disciples may have to “deny himself” and even “take up his Cross.” In support of this alarming prediction, he forcefully contrasts the fleeting pleasures of today with the promise of eternity: “For what profit is it to a man,” he asks, “if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” It is one of the New Testament’s hardest teachings, yet generations of churchgoers have understood that being Christian, on some level, means being ready to sacrifice--money, autonomy or even their lives.

³⁸ Christians who value riches seem to show a stunning lack of concern for anyone else. Jesus and his disciples did not preach that God can give us what we want. Their message concerned the ways we can best serve God. The world would be a better place if people spent more time living the gospel message and less time twisting it to justify selfish behavior. Biema, *Does God want you to be Rich?* Time Magazine, 10 September, 2006.

assumption. American culture assumes a pragmatic interpretation of freedom, liberty, and justice consisting of willfully moral behavior as an expression of liberty. At the heart of pragmatism is relativism which softens morals and breeds tolerance.

Could it be possible that the Rortyan dream of a diversified America encompassed by polytheistic inclinations is closer to a reality than a dream,³⁹ as is his desire that Western monotheism become a relic of tradition past? His reasoning may be justified from the seeming confusion between various “goods and no overarching good”⁴⁰ which give opinion columns, reality programming, and talk shows their ratings.

We may or may not agree with Himmelfarb that America is a country of two cultures but we may agree that liberal pluralism is more pronounced given its effect

³⁹ Are we losing Protestants or simply flooded with non-Protestant Immigrants? The latter has been suggested, disapprovingly, by Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington. But NORC STUDY CO-AUTHOR TOM W. SMITH SAYS, "immigration is a factor, but it's not the major thing." More important are a falling away of adult believers and a declining number of Protestant children who keep the faith. The Catholic proportion of the population has held steady at 23%. Neither Jews nor Muslims top 4%. The category that has really jumped (from 8% to 14%) in the past decade is people who say they don't subscribe to any religious identification. Most of these groups aren't Atheists; say scholars like Claude Fischer at the University of California, Berkeley. They still believe in basics like God, heaven and the bible as an inspired text, but prefer to think of themselves as spiritual rather than anything more specific. David Van Biema, *Roll over Martin Luther Long the Dominant Faith Affiliation in the U.S. Protestantism may no longer boast a Majority*. Time Magazine, 16 August 2004.

⁴⁰ Rorty chooses the term "polytheism" carefully--and not altogether ironically--because he believes that the idea can bring together John Stuart Mill, Friedrich Nietzsche, and William James in the belief that "there is no actual or possible object of knowledge that would permit you to commensurate and rank all human needs." If gods and goods are plural and serve different people in different ways, why should we feel the need to rank them? In fact, it may be the pursuit of such divergent human ends that benefits us all in the long run. Hence "romantic utilitarian's" and pragmatists like Rorty "will probably drop the idea of diverse immortal persons, such as Olympian deities, but ... will retain the idea that there are diverse, conflicting, but equally valuable forms of life." The term "romantic," then, serves for Rorty as a more evocative term than "secular," since it suggests that atheism might speak just as inspirationally about their faith in human potentiality as theists speak about the movement of God in history.

upon the moral fiber of an entrenched Christian subculture.⁴¹ The question at hand is how entrenched is the evangelical church today in a society that lacks moral guidance?

AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY: KEY FACTORS OF DISINTEGRATION

There are four key characteristics representing the decline in American Christendom. The first is the position within the Christian community toward holiness which we will describe as “Sin-lite.”

Sin Lite

The Christian defines sin as failing to obey God’s requirements in contrast to Rortyan persuasion that approaches sin as failing to reach one’s potential or a dysfunctional behavior in need of therapy. Although sin-lite may aptly apply to we are concerned with Christian holiness in respect to honoring God. Sin light is akin to moral relativism within Christendom and is slothful in its relationship with Christ. It is characteristically shallow in much the same way Rortyan pragmatic theory neglects conscience for the sake of pleasure.

What hit me like a thunderbolt several years ago is that what I had been saying about liberal churches in the 1960s and 1970s now can be said about evangelical churches too. Have evangelicals now fixed their eyes on a worldly kingdom and chosen politics and money as their weapons? About ten years ago Martin Marty, a shrewd observer of the American church, said that by the end of the century evangelicals would be "the worldliest people in America." He was probably too cautious. Evangelicals fulfilled his prophecy before the turn of the millennium.⁴²

⁴¹ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Two Cultures: A Searching Examination of American Society in the Aftermath of Our Cultural Revolution*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2001).

⁴² Dr. James Montgomery Boice, *The Den Dulk Lectures: a series of three messages*, (Update magazine, Westminster Theological Seminary, Escondido, California), accessed from: <http://www.the-hyway.com/pragmatism>

The decline of morality in America is representative of liberal secularization, a loss of value for God, and often amplified to the non-churched that Christianity is nothing more than a religious belief than a personal relationship with the God. Perhaps the only difference is one goes to church on Sunday and the other plays golf. Sin lite communicates a hypocritical attitude to the non-churched community that it is possible to be religious on one hand and take God's mercy for granted on the other. This also furthers the difficulty to interpret moral liberty and choices that are pragmatically immoral. As the conflict between right and wrong widens it is being placed in the hands of government to make decisions for proper behavior.⁴³

Sin is a serious matter that must be mended within the fabric of evangelical Christians. It is necessary that the world see the character and kingdom of Christ. But there is a second factor that must be addressed. It is the lost mission of the church by which sin has scared it passion and purpose.

Loss of Mission

Has the evangelical church lost its sense of mission somewhere between establishing mission statements and visionary ideals?

Polls tell the story that most churches call themselves evangelical and their main emphasis is to present the Gospel to a lost world, although it is quite clear most churches do not have a high rate of success when it comes to saving the lost. We must

⁴³ The World Council of Churches theme of 1964 was "the world must set the agenda." Liberals became concerned that churches renounce their autonomy to the world even to the exclusion of the gospel. Once again we hear the voice of Rorty's social gospel that the church's first responsibility is to end hunger, racism, or whatever was of chief concern to the world. James Montgomery Boice, *The New Pragmatism*, [On-line database] <http://www.the-highway.com/pragmatism.html>

ask, “Is presenting the Gospel of salvation and converting the lost evangelism? Evangelism goes deeper than the task of presentation and conversion, rather evangelism as Jesus would describe is making disciples of all individuals. Then we are caught in a catch twenty-two. How can we make disciples when we do not know what a disciple looks like, when we do not have equipped volunteers or the money to sustain such a task?

We have presented the mission of the church as going into the entire world and making disciples of all nations. We have established hopefully that the gospel of happiness and wealth will not solve the issue of true mission. Then what is mission or the piece of the puzzle that is missing in evangelism? If it is not church growth principles, happiness, or seeking to play the role of the good neighbor what is it? It is because of sin we have lost the character of God toward wickedness and evil. The church may make necessary political statements for morality but the individual Christian must not hide behind political jurisdiction but to thwart evil in and around us.

For the above reasons we must reaffirm what the Church of God or the Kingdom of God is to represent: The Christian must affirm that they are representatives of the Kingdom of God that the church is organic, and is to promote all that is good. The Church is a restraining and enlightening force to the world: The follower of Christ are “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:13-16). By their influence and testimony they hold back the development of lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2:6 – 7) and because of the presence of the godly among the wicked God withholds judgment (Genesis 18:22-23). The Christian testimony makes known God’s requirements of man and the need of repentance and regeneration. To this end

God has made His people the custodians of His earth (2 Corinthians 5:19; Galatians 2:7; 1 Timothy 1:11), and with the Scriptures men are always to find the truth concerning God and spiritual things, should they have the desire to know these things. But more than that, the Church is to hold forth the Word of life to the world (Philippians 2:16) and to contend for the truth (Jude 3).⁴⁴

We are addressing key issues accentuate the decline of the American church and societal confusion concerning morals. We argued that sin (disregard for God) and the loss of mission (the inability to assault lawlessness) are ingredients contributing to its demise. Next we will discuss the issue of the Christian mind or intellect.

Barrenness of the Intellectual Life

Pluralism plays a major role in the barrenness of the intellectual life, in the sense of thinking critically and arriving at a reasonable conclusion of right or wrong. Ravi Zacharias writes “if the loss of shame was the child of secularization the loss of reason is the child of pluralism.”⁴⁵ We may agree that pluralism in respect to cultural diversity may be beneficial to understand other cultures although one may wish to side with Gene Veith who stated earlier that our pluralistic diversity is a pseudo-Americanized

⁴⁴ We should devote ourselves to social service on the same principle on which a man picks up sharp nails that he finds in the street on the way to work. It is one thing for him to devote his entire time to ridding the streets of nails, and another to remove such nails as he can without interfering with his main task. That is, the work of reformation must be definitely subordinated to the work of evangelism ... There are few worldly communities that realize the true worth of the people of God in their midst. It has, however, often been said that not many of the ungodly would want to live in a world where there are no churches and no Christians. This corroborates the opinion of the worth and purpose of the Church in the earth today. Henry, C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MA: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949.), 432-436.

⁴⁵ Zacharias, *Deliver us from Evil*, (Nashville, TN: W. Publishing Group, 1997), 95.

form of that culture. What is important to realize is that pluralism when coexisting with relativism becomes an irrational plague justifying liberty without limits.

There must be a common string by which we tune. There must be a boundary to the waters if the whole world is to not turn soggy. There has to be a system of justice if that does not happen strength of body will determine right and wrong. Children can strike their parents dead; our voracious appetite for power will ultimately devour ourselves. We are already seeing some of this happen. Yet there is nothing so vulgar left in our present cultural experience for what some professor cannot be found somewhere to justify it. Reason has died.⁴⁶

Secular pluralism betrays truth for a lie and softens intellectual life by sense perception. Sense perception is established in the array of religious cults in America or personalized designer religions. Although Christianity by the numbers is the leading religious consensus of the West the cultic agenda of America is becoming vividly mainline. According to Ron Rhodes,

Only Seven percent of Americans deny believing in any of a list of 18 paranormal experiences — such as UFOs, astrology, extrasensory perception, telepathy (mental communication through mystical means), clairvoyance, telekinesis (the ability to move physical objects by mystical powers), reincarnation, psychic healing, contact with the dead, witchcraft, and channeling. Almost 50 percent of the people polled said they believe in five or more of these items, and fully 75 percent said they have had a personal experience in at least one of the categories.⁴⁷

It is most probable in the pragmatic age of postmodernism further development of experiential evidence of the supernatural kind will evolve. The question is what will be the consequences of a society guided by opinion and contradiction without proper

⁴⁶ Ibid., 100.

⁴⁷ Ron Rhodes, *The Culting of America*, (Eugene: OR., Harvest House Publishers, 1994), 84-85.

parameters for behavioral expression in a world of free caring ironists who love liberty.⁴⁸

Pluralism breeds anti-intellectualism masking some of life's deepest questions by turning a deaf ear of flagrant contradiction and justification for irrationality. "When pluralization finds no answer amid our differences to the questions of culture, evil is unleashed particularly upon those whom we do not claim to love and, indeed, end up hating."⁴⁹

We have addressed issues facing the decline of the American church. We have argued that sin (disregard for God) and loss of mission (the lackadaisical attitude toward lawlessness) are ingredients contributing to its demise. We have touched upon the issue of the Christian mind or intellect (an historical gateway to the most anti-intellectual period known to the Western world) Fourth we will discuss the disregard for Scripture.

Disregard for Scripture

Christians are biblically illiterate. If this is a result of pluralistic passivity to peacefully coexist with society is unknown nevertheless it is a spiritual dilemma of the heart. Statistics imply that among Christians attending church regularly more than 35 percent do not read their Bible. More clearly stated, in a church of 500 adults about 175 do not read their Bibles. In a mega-church of 5,000 adult members, some 1,750 do

⁴⁸ Pragmatic pluralism seeks irrational liberties without intelligent facts seeking to justify her actions without constraint - "the pragmatic plague of how to build became more important than how to be," Zacharias, *Deliver us from Evil*, 39.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 101.

not read their Bibles.⁵⁰ This is a serious indication that the majority of Christians are spiritually inept at basic biblical skills and immature in faith and beliefs leaving them open to deception from new religious movements and unable to discern truth from a lie.

The lack of Bible reading stems from approaching the Bible with a skeptical mind set, shallow intentions, with little experiential enthusiasm, and from an anti-intellectual mindset that devalues the Bible as meaningless, time consuming, and boring. All of which rule out the majority of excuses that imply time is the most crucial factor for not reading the Bible. The fact is Christians have lost their passion for God out of a deeper respect for the values of this world, and while many Christians may acknowledge this they seem unable to make determinative efforts to change their lifestyle.

The following should be a no brainier. If evangelicals fail to consistently read their Bibles the result is the inability to discern truths that are distinctively Christian as a result there is confusion in individual lives as to who God is. Thus statistics concerning prayer exemplifies the fact that four out of every ten adults strongly agree that when Christians, Jews, Mormons, Buddhists, and Muslims pray, they are all addressing the same god who is identified by a diversity of names.⁵¹ Furthermore Christian immaturity lends to the idea that what is important is not what religion someone follows. Instead the spiritual dimension one commits to is most important since all religions teach basically the same things we must be tolerant toward one

⁵⁰ George Barna, *What Americans believe*, (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991) 289.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 175.

another beliefs. Perhaps more devastating is our congregation's inability to equip Christians to discern basic biblical teaching.

Our subject of the disregard for Scripture may take other avenues such as approaching Scripture with selfish intent, that is, what's in it for me, rather than knowing the ways of God or understanding His nature and purpose for his followers and for humanity. Yet the greatest challenges the evangelical church faces is how many individuals who claim to be born again are truly disciples of God or Christians at all, and what needs to be done to change the attitude of the church from a volunteer organization to a deeply committed people who love God and serve with passion.

CHAPTER FOUR

A CALL TO RENEWAL

We do not want a church that will move with the world. We want a church that will move the world.¹

All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.²

This writer has sought to explain the tide of change coming upon America and Western civilization. Many may notice a change of landscape with differing interests in art, architecture, as well as advancements in technology and graphic arts. But there is another influence more deadly than that of Rortyan pragmatism whose unwavering purpose is to destroy the foundations of knowledge, morals, and most of all to put to death the age old myth of metaphysics, or at least bring the idea of God into human perspective of a solidified people whose works of faith will bring a better tomorrow.

We have recognized the failure of many evangelicals who have sought to change the world through a better neighbor policy that is bending over backwards to accommodate the world rather than to accommodate the character and nature of God.

What must be done to change the course of the church to confront evil, to stand in the pathway of wickedness and save a world bent on building another Babel, whose purpose is to establish humankind's unwavering ability to take to the heavens and declare that human ingenuity does not need a transcendent mythical savior but faith in the human spirit?

¹ Michael F. Finch, *G.K. Chesterton: A Biography*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 277.

² Attributed to Edmund Burke, but never found in his works. It may be a paraphrase of Burke's view that "When bad men combine, the good must associate; else they will fall one by one, an un-pitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle," (Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents, April 23, 1770).

Let us be certain of our Christian calling and unwavering faith and commitment to God.

CONTEND FOR THE FAITH

Christians must stand for the faith delivered to them and be strong in proclaiming the Gospel. Individuals seek stability in a world undone. Rorty himself looks for the legitimate, that which possesses individuals to stand for what they believe. While he is liberal in his interpretation of life, he will not respect congregations with soggy testimonies or corporate growth concepts that will not change society and especially if conversion proves to be nothing more than going to church. He seeks as the world seeks a movement whereby individuals are caught up in what they believe, are bold in the proclamation of it to the extent of withstanding persecution for the right to own the land, that is recapturing societal dignity and hope in a better future and the eradication of evil against humankind itself.

To contend for the faith is to say it the way it is. There are those times when a non-verbal witness is proper when one's works speak on behalf of God, but verbal testimony is the power of God to save and change lives.

Contending for the faith will bring ridicule and persecution as well as trust and faith in God. Wickedness within Society must be confronted while representing absolute truths and answering questions in loving compassion will energize the church to meet the needs of the world. At this time the church has no passion because it has no vision for doing the works of God.

Christianity is an intellectual religion we are called to love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our *mind*, and with all our strength. Therefore it is a necessity to know

the role of the church for without it we cannot fulfill the purpose of God in and through the fellowship of believers.

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

It is advantageous to Christian faith and practice to acknowledge God at work in, through, and around them. (How can we know God's unique fingerprint on America?). The American Christian and pagan alike cannot deny America's uniqueness, be it God or some other factor that sets her above all nations of the earth. America is recognized by her *bountiful* blessings – spacious amber fields of grain; her *presence* and *stability* – high mountain majesty; her *vastness* – from sea to shining sea; her devotion to liberty – home of the free; and her determined *resolve* – home of the brave; the cost – blood. Although perhaps for the first time since the pre-Civil War era traditional historic America is experiencing an underlying skepticism, a lack of democratic consensus, a restlessness that not all is well politically, culturally, and economically. Ironically Richard Rorty also fears the brink of disaster is near, that America is standing at an impasse, and as an object of concern, who will gain the final victory of an America up for grabs.

HOME FIELD ADVANTAGE

It is vital that those who wish to be serious followers of Christ be involved in a home church ministry. Home church ministries that will equip, teach, and comfort believers. This is a place whereby individuals can find loving accountability and support. To be home church is much like being home schooled. It provides excellent

education and support for believers who no longer find their local church relevant to meeting the needs of the kingdom today.

House churches have the advantage of not being in debt to the community financially with regards to supporting a building. Funds can be used to equip individuals rather than put new roofs on buildings and in a capitalistic society the sky is the limit. Home missions can be supported; staffing can be educated in seminaries through the giving of the saints. Home church leaders or pastors can be professionally trained and paid for their work in the ministry.

Conclusion

Today is the perfect time to liberate the church and society from certain doom. The American society is open to understanding dialogue, ready to invest in something legitimate and the flood gates are open for believers holding to absolute truth with a hand on the Bible and a hand outstretched.

GLOSSARY

Agnosticism: Agnosticism from the Greek *agnostikos*, “unknowing,” or “a profession of ignorance.”¹

Ahistorical: not concerned with or related to history, historical development, or tradition - the *ahistorical* attitudes of the radicals.

Analytical Philosophy: A movement in philosophy, primarily in England and North America, which advocates the analysis of language as the heart of philosophy.

Anarchy: Lack of government; the absence of any formal system of government in a society. **A chaotic situation:** a situation in which there is a total lack of organization or control.

Antinomian: One who rejects socially established morality.²

Apotheosis: Deification; Elevation to divine status.

Architectonic: Having an organized and unified structure that suggests an architectural design.³

¹ The term was coined by Thomas H. Huxley (1825-1895) in 1869, who used it to show his opposition to those who claimed to have metaphysical explanations of all kinds of philosophical mysteries. It became a prominent banner in the nineteenth-century debate over religious beliefs, and was understood to mean one who held that knowledge of God is impossible because of the inherent limitations of the human mind.

Robert Flint refuted Huxley’s use of the term in his book *agnosticism* (Scribner and Sons, 1903), arguing that the ancient term “skepticism” more accurately describes what Huxley believed about God. Flint maintains that Huxley simply wanted to hide his negative religious views.

There have been two types of agnostics throughout history: (1) Those who deny that reason can know God and therefore suspend judgment on God’s existence (Bertrand Russell, 1872-1970; and (2) Those who deny that reason can prove or disprove God, but nonetheless continue to believe in such a Being (Immanuel Kant, 1724-1804). The latter group could be called “religious agnostics.” There are five philosophical systems in which agnosticism is considered a valid option: nominalism, empiricism, Kantianism, logical positivism, and existentialism.

² One who holds that under the gospel dispensation of grace the moral law is of no use or obligation because faith alone is necessary to salvation.

³ Note: Richard Rorty – *Consequences of Pragmatism*: “The differences in environment, I shall claim, consist in the fact that in the early nineteenth century there was a well-defined and well-regarded discipline, philosophy, which had claims to be architectonic for culture, and within which metaphysical theses could be argued. In our culture there is no such discipline. Idealism was based upon a metaphysical thesis, but textualism is not [140]. I disagree with Rorty in his broad use the argument “our culture has no architectonic discipline.” I believe Rorty is assuming individual ignorance to prove a point that is not true. There are conservative

Artifact: An inaccurate observation, effect, or result, especially one resulting from the technology used in scientific investigation or from experimental error: *The apparent pattern in the data was an artifact of the collection method*

Autonomy: The quality of state of being self-governing; especially: the right of self-government; a self directing freedom and especially moral independence.

Bourgeois Liberal: Bourgeois – of, relating to, or characteristic of the townsman or of the social middle class; marked by a concern for material interests and respectability and a tendency toward mediocrity; dominated by commercial and industrial interests: *capitalistic*.

Canon of the New Testament: From the Greek *kanon*, “rule,” the 27 books that are accepted as inspired by and intended by God for inclusion in the New Testament, the collection of books regarded as genuine, authoritative, and inspired.

Capitalism: noun [MASS NOUN] an economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state.

Causality: Example: Nietzsche, the grandfather of postmodernism, espoused a view that proclaimed the death of God and a meaningless universe (existential) of causality, wherein we cannot know the difference between truth and illusion.

Classical Church: Authoritative, Traditional; relating to a form or system considered of first significance in earlier times to a pattern of usage sanctioned by a body of literature rather than by everyday speech.

Coherence: The quality or state of cohering: as a systematic or logical connection or consistency; holding together as a harmonious or credible whole.

Communitarian: Advocate of collective way of living: a member or supporter of a collectivist or cooperative community or system. **A people's ownership and management:** the system of control and ownership of factories and farms and of the means of production and distribution of products by a nation's people

Contemporary Theologian: Example: The perplexing nature of these questions in the light of the entrenched pluralism of postmodern theology helps explain why methodological questions have been the consuming passion of many contemporary theologians during the past two decades.

philosophers of the other side which have strong disciplinary architectonic virtues for the West.

Contingency – Traditional: An object or being which is *contingent* is dependent (supported on all sides) on something or someone outside itself for its very being, that is, in every way it exists. In theology, contingency is used in the arguments for the existence of God.

Culture: The effort to provide a coherent set of answers to the existentialist situations that confront all human beings in the passage of their lives.

Deconstructionism: A term tied very closely to postmodernism, deconstructionism is a challenge to the attempt to establish any ultimate or secure meaning in a text. Basing itself in language analysis, it seeks to "deconstruct" the ideological biases (gender, racial, economic, political, cultural) and traditional assumptions that infect all histories, as well as philosophical and religious "truths."⁴

Deontology: (deontological); the theory or study of moral obligation.

Dialectic: Drawing out truth through dialogue that leads to logical conclusions: The ancient Greeks used the term dialectic to refer to various methods of reasoning and discussion in order to discover the truth. More recently, Kant applied the term to the criticism of the contradictions which arise from supposing knowledge of objects beyond the limits of experience, e. g. the soul. Hegel applied the term to the process of thought by which apparent contradictions (which he termed thesis and antithesis) are seen to be part of a higher truth (synthesis).

Dialectical: A process of thought or of history which by the tension between thesis [proposition advanced by an argument] and antithesis [a disagreement] leads to a synthesis.

⁴ Deconstructionism is based on the premise that much of human history, in trying to understand, and then define, reality has led to various forms of domination - of nature, of people of color, of the poor, of homosexuals, etc. Like postmodernism, deconstructionism finds concrete experience more valid than abstract ideas and, therefore, refutes any attempts to produce a history, or a truth. In other words, the multiplicities and contingencies of human experience necessarily bring knowledge down to the local and specific level, and challenge the tendency to centralize power through the claims of an ultimate truth which must be accepted or obeyed by all.

Deconstruction represents a new kind of relativism, one that is intellectually sophisticated, theologically grounded, and methodologically rigorous. It corrodes the very concept of absolute truth. This means knowledge is no longer seen as absolute truth, rather, knowledge is seen in terms of rearranging information into a new paradigm. Deconstructionists further assume that societies are inherently oppressive. These thinkers draw on Nietzsche, Marx and Freud to argue that the culture lies beneath the surface of literary works as masks for sinister, perhaps unconscious conspiracy. Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994), 56.

Doxography: A system in which Richard Rorty condemns: “The system used by weary professors when they convert their ancient lecture notes into books for students.” Doxography, he says, de-brains the great philosophers whose work it tires to explain.⁵

Edifying Philosopher: Epistemology: The theory of knowledge or how we know. In philosophy, epistemology examines how we gain knowledge, investigating the origin, structure, methods and validity of knowledge.⁶

Essence: Properties or attributes by means of which something can be placed in its proper class or identified as being what it is.

Existentialism: philosophical movement centered on individual existence: a philosophical movement begun in the 19th century that denies that the universe has any intrinsic meaning or purpose. It requires people to take responsibility for their own actions and shape their own destinies.⁷ **Postmodern Existentialism:** finds its roots in Nietzsche to emphasize will and power. Therefore liberty and liberation comes from rebelling against existing power structures, including oppressive notions of “knowledge and truth.” “A philosophical theory or approach which emphasizes the existence of the individual person as a free and responsible agent determining their own development through acts of the will.” (Oxford Dictionary)

Final Vocabulary: Is one which we cannot help using for when we reach it our spade is turned. We cannot undercut it because we have no meta-vocabulary in which to phrase criticism of it.⁸ Final vocabulary is the sense that if doubt is cast in the worth of these words, their user has no non circular argumentative recourse to use

⁵ Richard Rorty, *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers, Volume 3*, (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 261.

⁶ Example: The most prominent proponent of a “postmodern epistemology,” Richard Rorty, has suggested that philosophy began a rapid descent when it turned its fundamental attention to epistemological questions.

⁷ In philosophy, a school of thought which stresses that existence is prior to essence— the fact that something exists is more important than what that something is, and the concrete and individual are more important than the abstract and universal. Important themes in existentialism are human freedom of choice, personal responsibility for actions, and the subjectivity and irrationality of human life.

Existentialism contends that neither traditional metaphysics nor the natural sciences are adequate for understanding life’s deepest truths. Existentialism is strictly non-metaphysical and anti-hypothetical, claiming to give only a simple description of existent psychological realities. Some prominent modern existentialists are Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel. Terry L. Miethe, *Compact Dictionary of Doctrinal Words*, (Minneapolis, Bethany House Publishers, 1988), 90.

⁸ Richard Rorty, *Essays on Heidegger and Others, Volume 2*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 37.

words are as far as he can go with language; beyond them there is only helpless passivity.⁹

Fascism: A political philosophy, movement, or regime (as that of the Fascisti) that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition. 2. A tendency toward or actual exercise of strong autocratic or dictatorial control <early instances of army *fascism* and brutality -- J. W. Aldridge>

Fideism: Reliance on faith rather than reason in pursuit of religious truth.

Gnosticism: An early religious cult which held God is good, matter is evil, and man is saved by knowledge (*Gr. Gnosis*) of special hidden truths.

Humanism: A devotion to the humanities : literary culture **b:** the revival of classical letters, individualistic and critical spirit, and emphasis on secular concerns characteristic of the Renaissance; A doctrine, attitude, or way of life centered on human interests or values; *especially* : a philosophy that usually rejects supernaturalism and stresses an individual's dignity and worth and capacity for self-realization through reason.

Humanity: The human is simply a programmed machine with downloaded information from enculturated language. DNA - Organic mechanisms as language using organism responding only if danger comes upon the community. **Richard Rorty, 1998), 32, 127).**

Immanent One: God's essence is present to creation. **Rorty, *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers, Volume 3*, (Cambridge University Press** in knowledge and power. He is active within the universe, involved with the processes of the world and of human history. The Apostle Paul addressed the Athenians saying: God "is not far from each one of us," ... For in him we live and move and have our being," (Acts 17:27-28).

Ironist: Check **Richard Rorty, *consequences of Pragmatism*,**

Language: Language is indeed intrinsic to thought and to personality itself. God's Word is an intrinsic part of His unfathomable being. It is true that language has gaps, limits, and slippage. Our language is clumsy; using words to express what we mean is sometimes like trying to thread a needle while wearing gloves. But

⁹ Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 166.

human language is a sign, a trace, of a divine language. Language may get in the way sometimes, but it is also revelatory.¹⁰

Language Games: Any alternative language game that advances a particular agenda, that meets “success” in countering institutional power, can pass as legitimate history. “Performance not truth” is the only criterion, Scholarship becomes rhetorical manipulation. Truth does not have to get in the way.¹¹

Linguistic Relativism: Objectivity cannot be captured by the contingent human invention of language, whether it is language about God, the cosmos or human values.

Literary Criticism: Whereas intellectual movements of the past have been worked out in the fields of metaphysics or science, *postmodernism* as a coherent intellectual discipline has developed out literary criticism (of all things). The same analysis that purports to show that works of literature can have no objective meaning can apply to everything else, including science, reason, and theology.

Logical Positivism: Logical positivism was an anti-metaphysical movement in philosophy, skeptical of idealism whose root was David Hume’s empirical skepticism in the eighteenth century which sought to seep into oblivion the pseudo-problems of metaphysics.

Metaethics: A study of ethical language: the branch of linguistic philosophy that analyzes and seeks to clarify the meaning and use of ethical expressions such as “good” and “ought.”

Metaphysics: Metaphysics has two main strands: that which holds that what exists lies beyond experience (as argued by Plato), and that which holds that objects of experience constitute the only reality (as argued by Kant, the logical positivists, and Hume). It is the area of philosophy that studies the nature of being as being, or ultimate reality. Metaphysics is essentially a philosophy of God, because while some metaphysical systems purport to be agnostic or atheistic, all claim that they

¹⁰ For the Postmodern language is bound up with our culture, it is largely beyond our control, and we cannot truly even think for ourselves. To a large degree, our language thinks for us. There is no “transcendental logos,” no objective meaning, no realm of absolute truth that exists beyond the bounds of our human language. To use another postmodernist slogan, we are incarcerated in a “prison house of language.” There is no way to look at the world except by using language. Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 166.

¹¹ History is a network of agonistic language games where the criterion for success is performance not truth. The Philosophy of language should center around the notion of “speech act” and how do words relate to the world. Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 110 - 114.

arrive at first principles. Metaphysics must be consummated by some kind of theory of God.¹²

Metafiction: A fiction in which the author self-consciously alludes to the artificiality or literariness of a work by parodying or departing from novelistic conventions and traditional narrative techniques.

Meta-Narrative: A metanarrative can include any grand, all-encompassing story, classic text, or archetypal account of the historical record. They can also provide a framework upon which an individual's own experiences and thoughts may be ordered. These grand, all-encompassing stories are typically characterized by some form of 'transcendent and universal truth' in addition to an evolutionary tale of human existence (a story with a beginning, middle and an end).

National Socialism: Ideology and practices of Nazi Party; in Germany's Third Reich, which included national expansion, state control of the economy, the totalitarian principle of government, and anti-Semitism.¹³

Nationalism: Excessive devotion to nation: excessive or fanatical devotion to a nation and its interests often associated with a belief that one country is superior to all others [Hitler's Third Reich]. **A desire for political independence:** the desire to achieve political independence, especially by a country under foreign control or by a people with a separate identity and culture but no state of their own.

¹² Generalizations can be notoriously deceptive but the "Middle Ages was characterized by an interest in metaphysics rather than physics. By and large, the great minds of the middle Ages were not interested in the physical universe of its own sake; they were interested in the reality which they believed lay behind it. They were not so much concerned with scientific questions about natural phenomena. What interested them was the relationship between the natural and the supernatural. This manifested itself in many ways. One was Scholastic interest in theological questions with a philosophical slant. Scholasticism – the term refers to those medieval schools of thought which were concerned with defining and systematizing the Christian understanding of reality – was above all concerned with the relations of God and the world. Aquinas and Anselm share the same interest in asking ultimate questions and in relating Christian belief to rational thought. Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, (Ill., Inter Varsity Press, 1968), and *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2nd Ed., s. v. [CD ROM] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹³ The National Socialist Party: Spurred by the emotional speeches of Adolf Hitler, the National Socialist Party, or Nazis, took control of Germany in 1933. The Nazis then reorganized Germany into a totalitarian state, imposing strict laws, eliminating opposition, and implementing a racist policy against non-Aryan people, especially the Jews. Their systematic genocide of millions was the most tragic aspect of their rise to power. Nazi military aggression in Europe sparked World War II, one of the bloodiest wars in human history. Germany's defeat in World War II ended the Nazi regime.

Naturalism: The view that anything might have been otherwise, that there can be no condition-less conditions. All naturalists believe that all explanation is causal explanation of the actual, and that there is no such thing as a non-causal condition of possibility – cause and effect.

Nazism: **Hitler's philosophy;** the philosophy of the German National Socialist Party under the leadership of Adolf Hitler.

Nihilism: A doctrine or belief that conditions in the social organization are so bad as to make destruction desirable for its own sake independent of any constructive program or possibility; *capitalized:* the program of nineteenth century Russian party advocating revolutionary reform and using terrorism and assassination.

Nominalism: **Rejection of universals in philosophy;** the philosophical doctrine that there are no realities other than concrete individual objects.¹⁴

Objective: 1 a : relating to or existing as an object of thought without consideration of independent existence -- used chiefly in medieval philosophy **b :** of, relating to, or being an object , phenomenon, or condition in the realm of sensible experience independent of individual thought and perceptible by all observers : having reality independent of the mind <*objective* reality> <our reveries... are significantly and repeatedly shaped by our transactions with the *objective* world -- Marvin Reznikoff> -- compare SUBJECTIVE 3a **c** *of a symptom of disease* : perceptible to persons other than the affected individual -- compare SUBJECTIVE 4c **d :** involving or deriving from sense perception or experience with actual objects , conditions, or phenomena <*objective* awareness> <*objective* data>.

Ontology: **A study or theory of existence:** A branch of metaphysics concerned with the nature and relations of being or a particular theory about the nature of being or the kinds of existents.

Philosophy: The term philosophy derives from the Greek words *philein* “to love,” and *sophia*, “wisdom.” A philosopher, then, is a lover of wisdom. By historical definition a philosopher is an honest seeker of truth. Philosophy has been called the most general science, the underlying principle of any intellectual discipline. Note Rorty's definition.¹⁵

¹⁴ Nominalism (Latin nominalis, “of or pertaining to names”), in medieval Scholastic philosophy, doctrine stating that abstractions, known as universals, are without essential or substantive reality, and that only individual objects have real existence. These universals, such as animal, nation, beauty, circle, were held to be mere names, hence the term nominalism.

¹⁵ Rorty's conception of philosophy is that it does not seek to make progress, nor is the aim of philosophy to increase knowledge, but an attempt to understand meaning for whatever it is that the philosopher is thinking about – Rorty is an analytic philosopher par-excellence. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, (New York, Penguin Books, 1999), 109.

Philosophy of Religion: The study of foundational issues in the field of religion, including the nature and purposes of religion, the existence of God, the problem of evil, the nature of religious language, freedom and determinism, revelation and faith, the problem with miracles, the problem of verification or religious truth claims, human destiny, immortality and resurrection, evidence of religious experience and objections to religious claims. Study of the philosophy of religion often revolves around explaining or defending a particular religious view or religion. In this aspect, the field is similar to apologetics, which states and defends philosophical issues in the Christian religion.

Platonism-Neo: Platonism modified in later antiquity to accord with Aristotelian, post-Aristotelian, and eastern conceptions that conceives of the world as an emanation from an ultimate indivisible being with whom the soul is capable of being reunited in trance or ecstasy; a doctrine similar to ancient Neo-Platonism.¹⁶

Platonism: philosophy of Plato; the philosophy or teachings of Plato, especially the theory that both physical objects and instances of qualities are recognizable because of their common relationship to an abstract form or idea.¹⁷

Pluralism: A theory that there are more than one or more than two kinds of ultimate reality; A theory that reality is composed of a plurality of entities; A state of society in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups maintain an autonomous participation in and development of their traditional culture or special interest within the confines of a common civilization (maintaining cultural differences, but share overall political and economic power); A concept, doctrine, or policy advocating this state.¹⁸

Furthermore, Rorty argues that the attempt (which has defined traditional philosophy) or any discourse (scientific, political, theological, or whatever) means to explicate rationality and objectivity in terms of conditions of accurate representation is a self-deceptive effort to eternalize the normal discourse of the day, and that, since the Greeks, philosophy's self-image has been dominated by this attempt. Thus what is needed is a systematic and edifying philosophy. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, (Princeton University Press, 1979), 11.

¹⁶ Neo-Platonism: Literally, the "New Platonism." Neo-Platonism was a resurgence of Greek philosophy in the third to the sixth centuries considered by many to be the last great effort of ancient pagan philosophy. Its exponents believed the movement was a direct continuation of Plato's thought. Ammonius Saccus (second century A.D.) and Plotinus (c. A.D. 204-270) was prominent Neo-Platonist. Plotinus taught that God, that is, "The God" or "The One," was beyond being, essence or knowledge.

¹⁷ Rorty's Platonism: the claim that the point of inquiry is to get in touch with something like Being, or the God, or Truth or Reality – something large and powerful which we have a duty to apprehend correctly. Richard Rorty, *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, Volume 2, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 27.

¹⁸ Neo-Platonism: Literally, the "New Platonism." Neo-Platonism was a resurgence of Greek philosophy in the third to the sixth centuries considered by many to be the last great effort of ancient pagan philosophy. Its exponents believed the movement was a direct continuation of Plato's thought. Ammonius Saccus (second century A.D.) and Plotinus (c.

Post-structuralism: Emerging in French intellectual life in the late 1960s and early 1970s, post-structuralism embraced Jacques Derrida's deconstructionism and the later work of Roland Barthes, the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva (b. 1941), the historical critiques of Michel Foucault, and the writings of Jean-Fran & cc. ed; ois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard. It departed from the claims to objectivity and comprehensiveness made by structuralism and emphasized instead plurality and deferral of meaning, rejecting the fixed binary oppositions of structuralism and the validity of authorial authority.

Pragmatism, American: The American pragmatists are thinkers who never really broke out of positivism and thus never broke with philosophy.¹⁹

Pragmatism: A way of thinking about results: a straightforward practical way of thinking about things or dealing with problems, concerned with results rather than with theories and principles. **A way of evaluating theories:** a philosophical view that a theory or concept should be evaluated in terms of how it works and its consequences as the standard for action and thought.²⁰ See also *instrumentalism*. Thus pragmatism calls for ideas and theories to be tested in practice, by assessing whether acting upon the idea or theory produces desirable or undesirable results. According to pragmatists, all claims about truth, knowledge, morality, and politics must be tested in this way.

Preservation: That which preserves; God agency is continuous maintaining the existence all the things which He has made, together with all their properties and powers. In preservation we have, therefore, the first manifestation of God's sovereign rule.

Proletarian: Worker; a member of the working class; **Industrial wage-earner: in Marxist theory,** a member of the industrial working class whose only asset is labor sold to an employer.

A.D. 204-270) was prominent Neo-Platonist. Plotinus taught that God, that is, "The God" or "The One," was beyond being, essence or knowledge.

¹⁹ Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1982), xvii.

²⁰ Rorty's pragmatism: "My first characterization of pragmatism is that it is simply anti-essentialism applied to notions like "truth," "knowledge," "language," "morality," and similar objects of philosophical theorizing." A second characterization of pragmatism might go like this: there is no epistemological difference between facts and values, nor any methodological difference between morality and science. Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 162-163. Pragmatism must be defined as the claim that the function of inquiry is in Bacon's words, to "relieve and benefit the condition of man." To make us happier by enabling us to cope more successfully with the physical environment and with each other. *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, Volume 2, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 27.

Providence: Etymologically; the word means foreseeing, or providing for the future. But in theology the word has received a more specialized meaning. In this field providence means that continuous activity of God whereby He makes all the events of the physical, mental, and moral phenomena work out His purposes; and that this purpose is nothing short of the original design of God in creation.

Quintessence/Quintessential: The fifth and highest element in ancient and medieval philosophy that permeates all nature and is the substance composing the celestial bodies; the essence of a thing in its purest and most concentrated form; The most typical example or representative. Example: She may well be quintessential postmodernist. Our bodies are proclivities are defining our reason for being.

Rationality: The continual reweaving of a web of beliefs rather than ... the application of criteria to cases. Richard Rorty, Objectivity, Relativism and Truth: Philosophical Papers, (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 26.

Recontextualization: A procedure, which substitutes for the pragmatic method of “inquiry,” advantages the critic by allowing him to set the ground rules for engagement.²¹

Reductionism: Simplification; analysis of something into simpler parts or organized systems, especially with a view to explaining or understanding it.
Oversimplification: the oversimplifying of something complex, or the misguided belief that everything can be explained in simple terms.

Relativism: A theory that knowledge is relative to the limited nature of the mind and the conditions of knowing; a view that ethical truths depend on the individuals and groups holding them.²² Relativism is that belief in changeable standards: the belief that concepts such as right and wrong, goodness and badness, or truth and falsehood are not absolute but change from culture to culture and situation to situation.

Renaissance: *Capitalized* the transitional movement in Europe between medieval and modern times beginning in the 14th century in Italy, lasting into the 17th century, and marked by a humanistic revival of classical influence expressed in a flowering of the arts and literature and by the beginnings of modern.

²¹ “Recontextualization” Rorty employs this method in his own assessments of historical and contemporary thinkers. This manner of inviting gadflies into his parlor is vintage Rorty.

²² “Relativism” is the view that every belief on a certain topic, or perhaps about any topic, is as good as every other. Yet (my words) no one holds that view. No one can say that two incompatible opinions on an important topic are equally good. Richard Rorty, Consequences of Pragmatism, (University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 166-167.

Romanticism: *Often capitalized* - A literary, artistic, and philosophical movement originating in the 18th century, characterized chiefly by a reaction against neoclassicism and an emphasis on the imagination and emotions, and marked especially in English literature by sensibility and the use of autobiographical material, an exaltation of the primitive and the common man, an appreciation of external nature, an interest in the remote, a predilection for melancholy, and the use in poetry of older verse forms.

Secularism: **Exclusion of religion from public affairs:** the belief that religion and religious bodies should have no part in political or civic affairs or in running public institutions, especially schools. **The Rejection of religion:** or its exclusion from a philosophical or moral system.

Sectarian: Relating to, or characteristic of a sect or sectarian; limited in character or scope: PAROCHIAL.

Security: The conditions of life sufficiently risk free as to make ones different from others inessential to one's self respect, one's sense of self worth. Richard Rorty, *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers, Volume 3*, (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 180.

Social Gospel: A liberal movement; in American Protestantism, prominent in the late 19th century, which sought to apply Christian principles to a variety of social problems engendered by industrialization. Its founders and leaders included the clergymen Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch, who tried to counteract the effects of expanding capitalism by teaching religion and human dignity to the working class. Proponents of the Social Gospel also opposed the tacit support given by organized religions to unrestrained capitalism.²³

Socialism: Political system of communal ownership; a political theory or system in which the means of production and distribution are controlled by the people and operated according to equity and fairness rather than market principles.²⁴

²³ The Social Gospel movement's views were formally expressed in 1908 when the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America (a forerunner of the National Council of Churches) adopted a "social creed of the churches." This creed called for the abolition of child labor, improved working conditions for women, a day off each week, and the right of all workers to a living wage. Many of the aims of the Social Gospel movement were espoused by organized labor in the early years of the century, and some were later incorporated in the New Deal programs of the 1930s.

²⁴ Movement based on socialism: a political movement based on principles of socialism, typically advocating an end to private property and to the exploitation of workers; A Stage between capitalism and communism: in Marxist theory, the stage after the proletarian revolution when a society is changing from capitalism to communism, marked by pay distributed according to work done rather than need.

Subjective: Not impartial; based on someone's opinion or feelings rather than on facts or evidence. In *philosophy*: **existing by per caption;** existing only in the mind and not independently of it. In *grammar*: **relating to subject of verb:** relating to or forming the subject of a verb.²⁵

Totalitarian: Centralized and dictatorial: relating to or operating a centralized government system in which a single party without opposition rules over political, economic, social, and cultural life.

Transcendent One: God is self-Sufficient apart from the world and is everywhere present. God is above the universe and comes to the world from beyond. As the Hebrew Scriptures so forcefully declare, God dwells in heaven. "God is in heaven and you are on earth," (Eccles 5:2). And the seer reports seeing the Lord "seated on a throne, high and exalted" (Is. 6:1).²⁶

True: Ordinary everyday desires – is to know the criterion of truth, to understand what it would take for a belief to work. **Richard Rorty**, *Essays on Heidegger and Others, Volume 2*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 63- 67.²⁷

Truth: Truth is imagining a successful strategy for addressing the tension between the needs of the individual in his or her biological and social environment. **Richard**

²⁵ 1: of, relating to, or constituting a subject: as a obsolete: of, relating to, or characteristic of one that is a subject especially in lack of freedom of action or in submissiveness by being or relating to a grammatical subject; especially: NOMINATIVE 2: of or relating to the essential being of that which has substance, qualities, attributes, or relations 3 a: characteristic of or belonging to reality as perceived rather than as independent of mind: PHENOMENAL -- compare OBJECTIVE: relating to or being experience or knowledge as conditioned by personal mental characteristics or states.

²⁶ Theism holds to a God who is both beyond and in the world God is transcendent and immanent. God is transcendent. "The universe is finite or limited and God is infinite or unlimited. Father, God is "in" the universe. That is to say, God is immanently present as the sustaining cause of the universe. In short, God's relation to the world is analogous with a painter's relation to his painting. The painter is beyond the painting, but he is also reflected in the painting and is the cause of it." Yet God is continually, personally, and intimately involved with sustaining the universe, whereas the painter can walk away from his painting once it is painted. Norman L. Geisler, and Paul D. Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Books House Co., 1987), 271-272.

²⁷ Note: Postmodernists justify the distortion of truth by saying that our perceptions of truth are always imaginative constructs, always "fictions" of one kind or another. New journalists know exactly what they are doing and make no bones about their biases and lack of objectivity. Because postmodernists do not recognize the boundary between truth and fiction, even when they are being "realistic," they reject objectivity and maintain their position that truth is relative. Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994), 137.

Rorty, *Essays on Heidegger and Others, Volume 2*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 63- 67.²⁸

For pragmatists, Truth is the name of a property which all true statements share, not an absolute as in a hierarchical sense, “It is common that Bacon did not write Shakespeare, it rained yesterday, love is better than hate.” Pragmatists see certain acts as good ones to perform, under the circumstances, but doubt there is anything general and useful to say about what makes them good. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, (Cambridge University Press, 1989), xiii.

Rortyan Truth: is simply common sense. Richard Rorty, *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers, Volume 3*, (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 41.

Tyranny: Cruel use of power; cruelty and injustice in the exercise of power or authority over others.

Utilitarianism: "A moral theory according to which an action is right if and only if it conforms to the principle of utility. Bentham formulated the principle of utility as part of such a theory in *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* in 1789. An action conforms to the principle of utility if and only if its performance will be more productive of pleasure or happiness, or more preventive of pain or unhappiness, than any alternative. Instead of 'pleasure' and 'happiness' the word 'welfare' is also apt: the value of the consequences of an action is determined solely by the welfare of individuals."²⁹

Utopia: Ideal and perfect state: an ideal and perfect place or state where everyone lives in harmony and everything is for the best. **Note: What is a definition of Richard Rorty’s utopia? (He believes utopia will never be fulfilled but will continue to give hope the future of those we leave it too.**

²⁸ “Open mindedness should not be fostered because, as Scripture teaches, Truth is great and will prevail, nor because, as Milton suggests, Truth will always win in a free and open encounter. It should be fostered for its own sake.” Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

²⁹ Utilitarianism has become absorbed into the blood stream of much modern thinking. Utilitarian ideas tend to be regarded as a more rational alternative to Christianity as the basis for political and social action. In its simplest and crudest form utilitarianism teaches that the right action is the one that promotes or at least tries to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number – Spock of Star Trek fame “The needs of the many out weigh the needs of the few. ” Brown, Colin. *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1968.

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